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MAJOR LEAGUE SOCCER

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APRIL 2005

WORLD SOCCER comment

SAMUEL ETO'O is our cover star this month. He's a fascinating character who has been at the heart of Barcelona's revival under coach Frank Rijkaard and president Joan Laporta. His achievement in being voted African Footballer of the Year for the second time running has only added to his high profile.

Yet it is his role in speaking out against racism that has marked Eto'o out as a special case. Eto'o is one of those players who gives little away in interviews but speaks from the heart when the occasion demands it.

We may never get to the bottom of the controversy surrounding Eto'o's outburst following that extraordinary Champions League match at Stamford Bridge. But the Barcelona striker's heat-of-the-moment comments just after the game were in stark contrast to those of Chelsea coach Jose Mourinho. The clearly calculated behaviour of Mourinho before, during and after games is starting to attract the attention of the authorities, and rightly so. In private, Mourinho is extremely personable, and Chelsea may indeed be on the verge of great things under him, but every one of the coach's pre-meditated public attacks on opponents will chip away at that achievement.

Changing tack completely, this month we preview the new Major League Soccer season in the United States. It is 10 years since MLS launched as a professional league on the back of the 1994 World Cup and at times it hasn't been easy. Progress has been steady and unspectacular, and the arrival of Youri Djorkaeff, 37 this month, as the League's major foreign signing for 2005 speaks volumes about MLS's inability to attract players at the peak of their careers. But the League's 10th anniversary is still a notable milestone.

One development that will be intriguing to follow this year is the arrival of Mexican 'satellite' club Chivas USA. There is already a great deal resting on their shoulders. As MLS's first Hispanic team, Chivas offer an opportunity to market the game to a much neglected sector of American society. And as the League's first foreign franchise team, they may provide a glimpse of the future. Rightly or wrongly, America, like China and the Far East, is seen by many wealthy European clubs as a market ripe for exploitation. If Chivas succeed Stateside, then you can guarantee that European clubs will not be far behind.

Suddenly, Malcolm Glazer's relentless pursuit of Manchester United PLC, buying up overpriced shares and provoking anger among genuine fans, may not seem so foolish after all.

Gavin Hamilton, Editor (gavin_hamilton@ipcmedia.com)

*** SAVE MONEY ON WORLD SOCCER SEE OUR SPECIAL SUBSCRIPTION OFFER ON PAGE 80

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RUSSIA: Dinamo Moscow signed no fewer than seven foreigners from the Portuguese League, including Brazilian striker Derlei from FC Porto.
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NIGERIA: Enyimba added the African Super Cup to their recent silverware haul with a 2-0 victory over Ghana's Hearts of Oak. **Page 57**

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● 09/02/05

Friendly fire...World Cup hosts Germany draw 2-2 with Argentina in Dusseldorf on the first international matchday of 2005

● 09/02/05

Back on track...Greece revive their flagging World Cup qualifying campaign with a 2-1 victory over Denmark

HEADLINERS

RINUS MICHELS

The death of the former Ajax, Barcelona and Holland coach has sparked a debate over his legacy

RINUS MICHELS WAS not an exponent of the beautiful game for its own sake, despite the rainforest of gibberish written about him since his death on March 3 at the age of 77. Nor would he wish to be remembered as such.

True, he had a certain arrogance about him. But this was not a skin-deep Mourinho-like arrogance, to be measured by mere statistics. On that level, Michels might be counted an also-ran. He won fewer European club trophies than Mourinho already has or, for that matter, Ernst Happel, his direct rival in Dutch club football at Feyenoord at the turn of the 1970s. In Spain, Michels enjoyed far less success as coach of Barcelona than would his erstwhile pupil, Johan Cruyff. At World Cup level his finest 'creation' was undermined by egotistical overconfidence, and it was only by forcing the pride of the next generation into a pragmatic harness not all of them appreciated that Michels scored at the 1988 European Championship.

Thus he remained 'Iron Rinus' towards the end of his frontline career, just as he had been in the early days at Ajax in the late 1960s.

Michels' virtue lay in not being blinkered about football in its narrowest focus. He saw the game as an expression of an approach to life. This was the man who laid the foundation of the Ajax ethic, which mixed education both on the pitch and in the classroom. Far more benefited from the Ajax schooling than the few who ultimately made it big-time.

Ruud Krol, one of Michels' star pupils and now joint caretaker coach at Ajax, said: "Michels always told us the rewards you get come back in relation to the work you put in. Maybe tomorrow, maybe next week, maybe in three weeks' or three months' time. On the training pitch he was very tough. Away from the pitch you could have a joke with him. He was both a schoolteacher and father figure. A remarkable man."

> **'On the training pitch he was very tough. Away from it you could have a joke with him. He was both a schoolteacher and father figure. A remarkable man'**
>
> *Ruud Krol*

Not, notice, a remarkable coach or trainer or manager, but man. This is what made Michels a superior figure to many of today's high-profile cardboard cut-outs.

Nor did he look down his nose at journalists seeking his opinion. Given the time, he was at his ease engaged in football talk. There was no need to keep asking him a stream of questions, either. Whenever I interviewed Michels one or two questions were sufficient for him to launch into the initial answer then take the theme forward with no need for a prompt.

His name will always be associated with Total Football. It was a concept of technical and tactical versatility he developed by capitalising on Dutch football's generational aberration. Yet

● 09/02/05

Riot act...Mexican players dodge missiles after their defeat of Costa Rica in San Jose

● 15/02/05

Goalless...Alianza Lima and Tigres draw 0-0 as the Libertadores Cup group stage gets under way

Ajax expressed it most effectively and dramatically after Michels had left for Barcelona.

That was the way it had to be. Only through winning their first Champions Cup under Michels in 1971 did Cruyff, Neeskens, Haan, Hulshoff and co gain the composure that propelled them on to a higher plane under the benevolently crafty command of Stefan Kovacs.

In Spain, Michels was restricted to the straitjacket of a working coach – albeit highly respected – rather than creative genius. Barcelona buy ready-made players for their first-team squad; nurturing the kids through from the youth ranks is not in the job description. Barcelona had lesser coaches for that role. Perhaps that was their mistake. Maybe they offered Michels the wrong job.

Master and pupil...Michels with Johan Cruyff at Barcelona

Certainly he brought Cruyff in his wake, in the summer of 1973, for a world record £922,000. But Cruyff the player won next to nothing with Barcelona: only one League title and no Champions Cups. Only when Cruyff returned as coach, including those magical four all-conquering years, did the Michels legacy pay off in Catalonia.

One European Championship (Holland), one Champions Cup (Ajax), five League titles (Ajax four, Barcelona one) and five domestic Cups (Ajax three, Barcelona one, Koln one) add up to 12 trophies at the highest level. Ferguson, Trapattoni and Stein – to name but three – each won more. But all excelled by following a traditional, well-worn path.

Michels was driven to be not only a winner but an innovator. That elevates him to a higher category altogether in the football pantheon.

Keir Radnedge

Champions of Europe...Michels led Holland to triumph at Euro 88

Numbers game

2...

the number of fans, both children, killed at the African Champions League match between USJF Ravinala and Kaizer Chiefs, the latest tragedy to hit the continent's football.

134,700,000...

estimated debts (in euros) of 1997 European champions Borussia Dortmund by mid-2005.

0...

number of Englishmen in Arsenal's 16-man squad to face Crystal Palace.

3,000...

fine (in euros) imposed on Spain coach Luis Aragones by the Spanish federation as punishment for racist comments about Thierry Henry.

600...

fine (in euros) imposed on Deportivo La Coruna after their fans racially abused Real Madrid full-back Roberto Carlos.

8,000,000...

total amount (in euros) estimated to have been raised by football to help victims of the Asian tsunami.

750,000...

amount (in euros) spent by Ronaldo on his engagement party at a chateau near Paris.

● 15/02/05

Hands across the world...the game's top players turn out in force at Barcelona's Camp Nou stadium to raise money for the victims of the Asian tsunami disaster. The 'World' team, captained by Ronaldinho, beats Andrii Shevchenko's 'Europe' team 6-3

● 17/02/05

Stalemate...Boca Juniors draw 0-0 away to Ecuador's Deportivo Cuenca

WS WORLD SOCCER Brian Glanville

...on the far too many words of Jose Mourinho...the disadvantage London clubs face when it comes to keeping talent...and how players' behaviour today is no worse than in years gone by

Mid-rant...Jose Mourinho

'What possessed Mourinho to name a team that excluded Duff, supposedly still injured, only for him to appear on the night and make Chelsea's goal?'

JOSE MOURINHO speaks. And speaks. And speaks. Till one thinks of the famous words of Prime Minister Clement Attlee many years ago to that left-wing academic gadfly Professor Harold Laski – "A period of silence on your part would be appreciated."

The list seems endless. After Chelsea had played Manchester United in the League Cup at Stamford Bridge, Mourinho declared the fact that Alex Ferguson had spoken to the referee at half-time as they came off the field, suggesting that this influenced the official's decisions in the second half. Not only did he say it just after the game, but for good or bad measure, he repeated it on closed-circuit television.

When Arsenal deployed a squad composed entirely of foreign players against Crystal Palace, we heard the Chelsea manager's voice again, deploring the fact, though it was surely none of his business.

Arsene Wenger, predictably put out, responded that the current Chelsea team had only one home-grown player in John Terry. The other Englishmen – Joe Cole, Scott Parker, Glen Johnson and Frank Lampard – were all bought for substantial fees.

If I may digress, the battle was lost when poor Artemio Franchi, then president of UEFA, was killed in a car crash in 1983. Till then, you might say that

● 19/02/05

Five-star show...Bayern Munich celebrate a 5-0 thrashing of Borussia Dortmund

● 19/02/05

All played out...Real Madrid's unbeaten run under new coach Vanderlei Luxemburgo is ended by Athletic Bilbao

● 22/02/05

Head start...Ivan Helguera gives Madrid the edge over Juventus by scoring the only goal of their Champions League first leg meeting

'The FA rule now in force for club academies would have stopped Man United from acquiring David Beckham, who grew up in east London'

Franchi had proved himself a master of unarmed combat or its non-violent equivalent, keeping at bay Mario Monti and the interfering European Union, although the EU had the controversial law utterly on its side. That is to say, freedom of movement within the Union for all workers quite obviously included footballers. Franchi, pleading soccer as a special case, for years managed to keep down the permitted figure of Euro imports to a mere three. But when he died, mediocrity ruled at UEFA and it inevitably wasn't long before the floodgates opened.

Another problem, as Alex Ferguson has pointed out, is the rule introduced by Howard Wilkinson when at the FA whereby club academies cannot enlist schoolboys who live more than a 90-minute journey away. This, of course, would have stopped Manchester United from acquiring David Beckham, who grew up in east London and who trained briefly with Spurs, but had always set his heart on joining the Old Trafford club.

United, in fact, have produced an admirably high quotient of local talent: Paul Scholes, Ryan Giggs (snatched admittedly from Manchester City), the Neville brothers, Wes Brown and Nicky Butt, now at Newcastle.

If you are, like Arsenal, a London club, there will be tremendous competition for any young talent that appears. And even when a club do find and nurture it, they can never be sure that it will stay. Take the case of Jermain Defoe, discovered and coached by Charlton, but snatched away from them by West Ham and now at Tottenham.

Back to the loquacious Mourinho. What possessed him, before the first leg of Chelsea's Champions League tie against Barcelona, to name a team that excluded Damien Duff, supposedly still injured, only for Duff to appear on the night and energetically make Chelsea's goal in the 2-1 defeat.

After the game, Mourinho culpably failed to show up for the press conference, blaming his absence on the alleged fact that his opposite number, Frank Rijkaard, had – here we go again – been talking at half-time to the referee. But what had that to do with failing to talk to the press?

Four days later during Chelsea's League Cup Final victory over Liverpool in Cardiff, Mourinho was banned from the dugout after making a gesture – applying a finger to his uncharacteristically closed mouth in front of the Liverpool supporters. His intention, he oddly claimed, was to admonish the press, who in fact were seated on the other side of the field.

There is no doubt, however Mourinho has tried to downplay it, that the absence of that coruscating Dutch winger Arjen Robben has seriously blunted the edge of the Chelsea attack.

Me? I used to be with Charlton...Tottenham's Defoe

But the Portuguese does deserve credit for the way that he eventually deployed three strikers against Liverpool in the shape of Eidur Gudjohnsen, mysteriously under-used in previous games, Didier Drogba (sent off against Barcelona, Mourinho seems to have hinted, after Rijkaard's supposed conversation with the referee) and the previously disappointing Mateja Kezman.

IT IS still hard to understand quite what possessed Sir Alan Sugar to make his wholesale attack on today's professional footballer. They are, he informed us, total scum, would be in jail were they not playing football, and he would not go into the trenches with any of them. Not, so far as I am aware, that Sir Alan, for all his aggression, has ever been into the trenches with anybody.

He can, of course, advance abundant chapter and verse. Hardly a week goes by without our reading of the trespasses of some professional footballer. But why should all our footballers be tarred with the same sordid brush? And what, again I wonder, made Sugar impugn them?

In the first place, just as Oscar Wilde declared that work is the curse of the drinking classes, so there has almost traditionally been a drinking culture among our professional players. Well before the war, the whole Clapton Orient team turned up drunk on Waterloo station on Christmas Day, en route to a match against Bournemouth. Their manager arrived with a whole barrel of beer. Centre-forward Ted Crawford told me that every time he went up to head a ball, he saw two of them; but Orient drew the game!

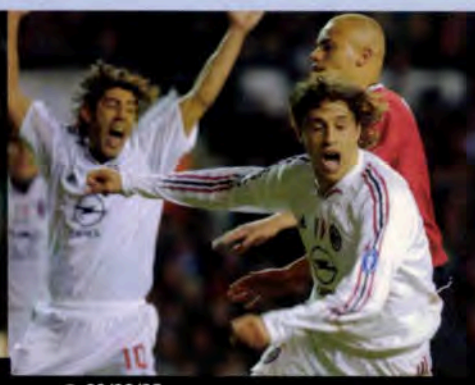
Players of that era never faced the colossal temptations of the young millionaires of today, suddenly, in their twenties or even teens, being paid immense salaries, with so little education or preparation to deal with them. Another Wilde dictum: "I can resist anything except temptation." And he was a mature adult with degrees from Oxford University and Dublin!

Besides, football intimately represents the society that produces it and that is increasingly obsessed by it. Morally, I cannot believe that today's players are any better or worse than their predecessors. They simply earn more.

Read Brian Glanville's weekly column at www.worldsoccer.com

● 23/02/05

Look back in anger...Didier Drogba of Chelsea clashes with Barca's Marquez shortly before being sent off at Camp Nou



● 23/02/05

Hernan the hero...Crespo celebrates scoring the winner for Milan away to Manchester United in the Champions League

● 23/02/05

Lyon kings...the French champions produce the best result of the Champions League first legs, winning 3-0 in Bremen

The lowdown on...

Schalke

Man in the spotlight...coach Ralf Rangnick faces the media

Why all the fuss?
Four years ago Schalke endured the heartbreak of being pipped to the Bundesliga title on the final weekend of the season by Bayern Munich – and the 2004-05 campaign is shaping up to be another duel between the clubs. Only goal difference separated Schalke and Bayern at the winter break and a half-dozen rounds into the spring campaign, they are still neck and neck. Schalke had a terrible start to this season, losing three out of their first four games. But since sacking coach Jupp Heynckes and appointing Ralf Rangnick, the *Konigsblauen* (Royal Blues) have been transformed into a real collective force with the belief they can lift the Bundesliga shield for the first time.

What's their history?
Schalke hail from Gelsenkirchen, a mining town in the industrialised Ruhr region. Formed in 1904 as FC Westfalia, they merged two decades later with TV 1877 Schalke to produce Schalke 04. They were Germany's top side of the 1930s, winning four titles, and there would be more league crowns in 1940, 1942 and 1958. Schalke were Bundesliga founder members in 1963, but they were implicated in a match-fixing scandal in the 1970-71 season and 13 players were banned. Beset by financial difficulties, they yo-yoed between the Bundesliga and the Second Division for much of the 1980s, but they have never been in real danger of relegation since regaining elite status in 1991. UEFA Cup winners in 1987.

Who is their powerbroker?
Since 1993, cigar-chomping general manager Rudi Assauer has ruled the roost. The 61-year-old is always ready with a meaty quote, loves to needle opponents and always wears his heart on his sleeve. This is no business school type. He played over 300 Bundesliga games in midfield for Werder Bremen and Borussia Dortmund, whom he helped win the 1966 Cup-winners Cup at the expense of Liverpool.

Don't mention...
Revelations in German economics magazine *Focus* that Schalke are £80million in debt.

Who picks the team?
Rangnick is Arsene Wenger without the trophies. Neither particularly cut it as a player but share the same cerebral and innovative approach to the stewardship of a pro club. Now 46, Rangnick got his foot on the coaching ladder in the early 1990s with Stuttgart's youth team. Led Hannover to the Second Division title in 2002.

What's the Rangnick philosophy?
To go for broke with three out-and-out strikers, Dane Ebbe Sand, Brazilian Ailton and German Gerald Asamoah. But it does not mean Rangnick's team lacks organisation. Defensive roles are well-defined and he sets great store on running certain training ground drills over and over again. Not one to rant and rave on the touchline, he prefers the power of persuasion to the dictat.

Who are the main men?
Frank Rost is an outstanding keeper with a Schmeichel-like authority, while centre-backs Marcelo Bordon and Mladen Krstajic have fitted in admirably since their summer moves from Stuttgart and Werder respectively. The midfield brains is Brazilian Lincoln, reborn following three erratic years at Kaiserslautern. Ailton, Bundesliga top scorer last term, wreaks havoc with that booming left foot.

What's their stadium like?
The state-of-the-art Arena AufSchalke, which came into use in 2001, is light years away from the club's old Parkstadion home. It has a capacity of 54,000 in its all-seater configuration, though standing room for over 16,000 is available, increasing capacity to 61,500. Full houses are the norm on matchdays, with the stadium also used to host trade fairs, conventions and concerts.

What chance of going all the way?
Much depends on the first-choice team staying healthy, since Schalke do not have Bayern's strength in depth. Having a natural goalscorer such as Ailton is a major plus, as is the vociferous support they enjoy home and away.

● 24/02/05

Shock result...a late goal from Auxerre's Lionel Mathis knocks Ajax out of the UEFA Cup

● 24/02/05

Spot the winners...Steaua Bucharest celebrate victory in a penalty shoot-out against holders Valencia in the UEFA Cup

GOOD MONTH FOR...

On target...Crespo

Daniel Passarella...the former Argentina captain and coach became the latest high-profile signing by Brazilian side Corinthians, on a reported salary of £60,000 a month.

Alfonso Perez Burrull...the first referee to stop a game to order spectators to refrain from racist chanting. The early stages of Malaga's game against Espanyol were marred by monkey chants directed at Espanyol's Cameroonian goalkeeper Carlos Kameni.

Jose Mourinho...is there no escaping the man? It could have been the month where it all went wrong for Chelsea, but a first trophy, the League Cup, and victory over Barcelona in the Champions League ensured Mourinho's critics held their fire.

Hernan Crespo...whose goals for Milan killed off Manchester United's Champions League challenge for another year and reminded Chelsea of what they rejected.

BAD MONTH FOR...

Maradona...whose doctor was forced to deny reports that the former Argentina star was visiting Colombia to undergo liposuction in a bid to reduce his weight, now 20 stone.

Jose Antonio Reyes...the Arsenal forward insisted he was happy in London despite being tricked by a hoax phone call into admitting to a Spanish radio station he would welcome a move to Real Madrid.

Delia Smith...the Norwich City supremo denied her half-time pep talk to fans during the 3-2 defeat by Manchester City – "We need a 12th man here. Where are you? Where are you? Let's be having you. Come on!" – was fuelled by a refresher too many.

Recipe for disaster...Delia tries to rouse the fans

Felipe...Fluminense's Brazil midfielder was suspended for six months after video footage showed him punching Campinense's Marcos Mendes during a Copa Brasil clash. Felipe alleged Mendes insulted his pregnant wife and cast aspersions on the child's paternity.

Notes & quotes

"Dear fans. Be fair to our refs. They are doing a great job every weekend. There are always controversial moments. I knew that before Wembley."
Former West Germany captain Uwe Seeler fronts an ad campaign asking supporters not to pillory refs. Obviously, Geoff Hurst's second goal in the 1966 World Cup Final still rankles.

"If I'm no longer totally motivated, I can't be the Ajax coach."
Ronald Koeman steps down in Amsterdam.

"We've been playing at an indifferent level and in spite of that we've still managed to catch Juventus. Let's hope Signora Fortune stays with us to the end of the season."
Milan boss Carlo Ancelotti thinks his team have had luck on their side in the Serie A race.

"Everything's going well. The only thing that isn't is points."
Peter Neururer (right), coach of relegation-threatened Bundesliga side Bochum, tries to look on the bright side.

"Diving is worse than shirt-pulling or a trip. I'm for red cards for those who dive."
FIFA president Sepp Blatter talks tough.

"From what I've seen of our referees, I'm sure we don't have a clean game."
Anestis Phillipides, the head of Greece's sports betting watchdog, cries foul.

● 25/02/05

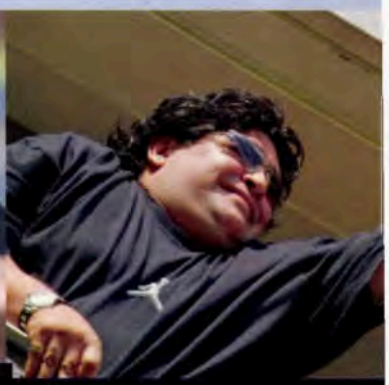
Fired...Claudio Ranieri contemplates life after Valencia following his sacking

● 27/02/05

New era...Chelsea celebrate winning the League Cup, their first trophy under Jose Mourinho, after beating Liverpool 3-2 in Cardiff

● 03/03/05

Goodbye to a maestro...Rinus Michels dies, aged 77, in a Belgian hospital



● 03/03/05

Clinical trials...Diego Maradona arrives in Colombia to receive medical treatment

WS WORLD SOCCER **Jim Holden**

Thank heavens for Mourinho

The Chelsea boss has his faults but we'd be worse off without him

THE BLAZING INTENSITY of Jose Mourinho at work makes him a compelling spectacle as he lights up the touchlines of our football cathedrals, consumed by rage one moment, dispensing bonhomie to all around the next. He's like a comet speeding across the night sky – and no one can take their eyes off him for a second.

Thank heavens for that. In an era when the eternal searchlight of the mass media prompts so many players and managers to retreat into their shells, to speak in platitudes and to hide their real characters away, we should cherish the fire of Mourinho.

Yes, he will make errors of judgement. Yes, UEFA will scold him for missing a press conference or two. Yes, the authorities in England will punish him for responding to the provocative taunts of opposing fans. And, yes, rival coaches will no doubt continue to be offended by his unbuttoned arrogance.

But I hope Mourinho stays true to his nature and, whatever he wins or loses this season with Chelsea, that he continues to speak his mind. Certainly, I hope he is not cowed into retreating from his strong objection to managers trying to influence referees at half-time in important matches.

This is an important cause.

In some quarters, Mourinho's attitude has been described as plain paranoia. Another explanation is that it reveals chip-on-the-shoulder provincialism, a legacy of his days at FC Porto, where it was routinely held that officials were likely to favour capital city clubs Benfica and Sporting Lisbon. In both recent cases where he has spoken out about perceived half-time collusion, it has been against two of the very few clubs – Manchester United and Barcelona – whose reputation remains bigger than Chelsea's.

Managerial mind games

Maybe there is a touch of residual provincialism. Maybe it was also part of the managerial mind games that accompany such titanic showdowns. And we can admit, too, there is a measure of hypocrisy in Mourinho's comments when he himself has been seen to complain with noisy fury at referees during the action.

Some have likened him to Brian Clough, and there are plenty of similarities between the two unlikely small-town European Cup winners. But Clough was unique in modern times as a high-profile manager who ordered his players not to argue with referees and who disciplined them if they did. Mourinho is not that good.

Nevertheless, that doesn't lessen the force of his complaint that it should be unacceptable for managers to have cosy, friendly conversations with referees in the tunnel or dressing-room area at half-time. It could be misinterpreted. It is open to abuse. And it is plain wrong.

Sure, the practice may have been tolerated for years, but then many bad practices have been allowed to flourish – widespread feigning of injury to get opponents sent off, diving to win bogus penalties, verbal abuse of referees by players, agents deliberately unsettling players. It doesn't mean they shouldn't be stopped.

I have no doubt that cracking down on this issue will offend the sensibilities of many coaches who talk to referees and mean no harm and certainly do no wrong. But a zero tolerance policy is surely the correct one at a time when the Hoyzer scandal in Germany reveals once again how easy it can be for the corruption of matches to occur.

'We should cherish Mourinho's fire in an era in which so many players and managers speak in platitudes'

Throughout the history of the game the easiest way to fix a football match has always been to nobble the referee – and that will never change. Soccer has to fight this scourge in every corner, especially now that the sport has become a huge vehicle for worldwide gambling.

Justice must not only be done. It must also be seen to be done. Jose Mourinho is quite right, in more ways than one, in his desire to lift soccer away from the shadows.

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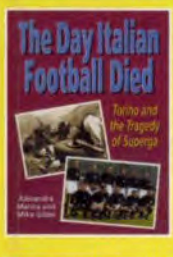

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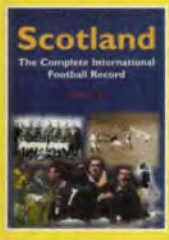

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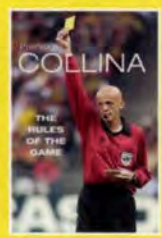

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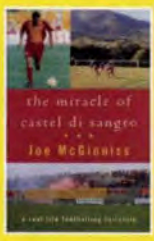

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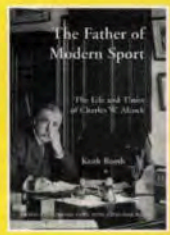

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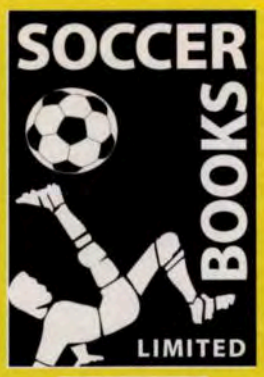

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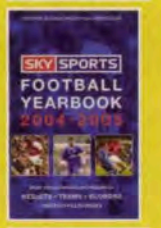

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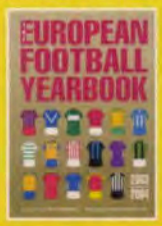

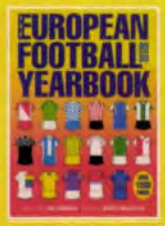

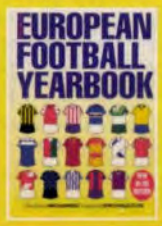

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Arrivederci, Ranieri

Valencia sacked the Italian coach after a disastrous six-month reign

SID LOWE
in Madrid

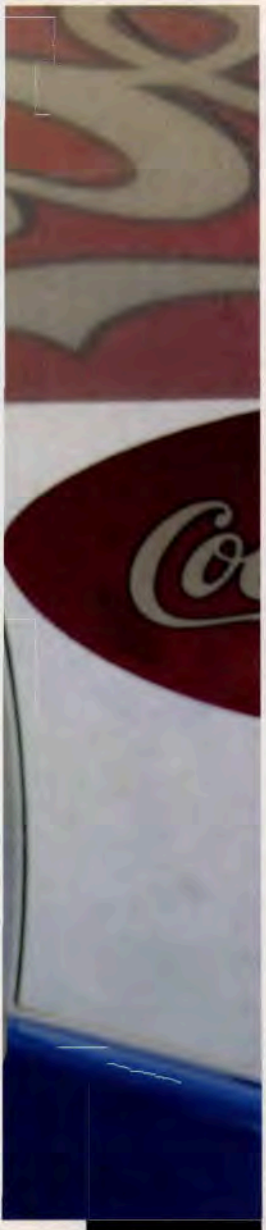
FEW DECISIONS HAVE been as popular in Valencia as making Claudio Ranieri manager – except for sacking Ranieri as manager. There might have been little more than six months between appointment and departure, but the consensus was the firing should have come sooner.

Nobody mourned Ranieri's loss, and most agreed with *El Pais* when it asked: "How much damage can a single manager do to a team? Infinite amounts, in Ranieri's case."

How things had changed. When Ranieri returned to take charge of Valencia last summer, he proudly admitted that he was the only coach who could have followed Rafa Benitez, the most successful manager in the club's history. He wasn't lying, either: in his first spell at Valencia, Ranieri won the Spanish Cup and built the swashbuckling side that Hector Cuper then took to two successive Champions League Finals.

"I am," he said, "the only man as popular as Benitez" – and how the board of directors knew it. With Benitez departing acrimoniously on his way to Liverpool, president Juan Bautista Soler realised that he needed to placate the fans. They were furious that the coach who won two League titles in three years (after a 31-year wait) wasn't just allowed to walk out the door but had been actively pushed towards it.

Benitez left exasperated at the club's constant failure to back him and deeply upset at the treatment he had received from



Outsider...Ranieri's policy of signing fellow Italians did not go down well in Valencia

Manuel Llorente, the director general he later described as "a snake without friends who hangs around in the shadows waiting to stab you in the back". Benitez memorably remarked: "I asked for a sofa and they brought me a lamp," but the club's signings policy was, in truth, just the tip of the iceberg. He tearfully bade farewell with a UEFA Cup and those two League titles under his arm.

No wonder the fans were furious; no wonder Soler turned to Ranieri, the popular choice.

Indulging Claudio

The president later admitted that tension had made him act in haste. Ranieri was signed in little over a day, given a three-year deal with a salary that dwarfed that of his predecessor, and was made general manager, not just coach.

"We signed Ranieri in an abnormal situation," Soler admitted. "We had just lost Benitez and we had to act quickly to get someone in. There was a board meeting coming up and some other shareholders had spoken to Ranieri. We acted precipitately and jumped at him. He insisted on three years, so we had to give him three years."

And a whole lot more besides. Where Benitez had been denied, Ranieri was lavishly indulged. Yet still he got it wrong, very wrong. He signed four Italians, none of whom has performed, fell out with much of the squad and indulged in high-profile training-ground harangues.

Ranieri dismantled Benitez's side, moving too quickly, obliterating their style and substance. His long-ball game prompted whistles, boos and waving hankies at Mestalla; he moved Amedeo Carboni, a 39-year-old who has always played at left-back, to the right; he rarely fielded Mista, last season's top scorer; and he relegated Pablo Aimar and goalkeeper Santiago Canizares to the bench – the latter decision a last, desperate throw of the dice as Valencia plummeted having lost five successive games.

Even Ranieri's quirky idiosyncrasies became irritating rather than charming and, six months after joining, he once again found himself out of a job, if not exactly out of pocket. His departure is expected to cost Valencia around £5m but the decision had become inevitable and unavoidable. The fans wanted him out, and Soler finally confirmed Ranieri's departure after Valencia were knocked out of the UEFA Cup by Steaua Bucharest on penalties.

The result was a disaster: the chance to defend last season's UEFA Cup success was the one, remaining consolation in a dreadful season. The reigning League champions were only sixth in the table, 19 points adrift of leaders Barcelona, they had gone out of the Spanish Cup to Second Division Lleida and were knocked out of the Champions League at the group stage.

Although Ranieri insisted after defeat in Bucharest that he would not resign, he accepted his fate. "Don't ask me whether or not I think I'm going to carry on at the club," he said. "What I think doesn't count for much." And so it proved.

"Valencia are going through a tough time but we have already taken steps to sort that out," said Soler, who confirmed that academy boss Antonio Lopez, Benitez's former No 2, would take over for the rest of the season.

Spot of Italy-bashing

The turnaround was immediate – and hungrily seized upon by the Spanish, who love nothing more than a spot of Italy-bashing. Ranieri's departure was treated like a liberation, columnists talking of the demise of the Roman "dictator". Valencia got rid of an Italian manager, replaced him with a Spanish one and won again at last, their first victory in six, 2-1 over Real Betis. And they did so courtesy of one very basic, warmly welcomed tactic: dropping the Italians.

Out went Ranieri's signings Marco Di Vaio, Emiliano Moretti, Bernardo Corradi and Stefano Fiore and in came stalwarts from Benitez's team. Canizares was back, as were Mista and Aimar, who had completed just four and six matches respectively under Ranieri.

Valencia had, *Marca* gleefully said, gone through a process of "de-Italianising" themselves, and that victory over Betis was followed by creditable, intense draws with Real Madrid and Sevilla.

It is too late to win the League, but the club's Champions League challenge is back on; they can salvage something from the season.

Not that it will be easy: just three points separated five teams with 11 games to play, from this season's surprise package, Espanyol, in third through Villarreal, Valencia and Sevilla to Betis in seventh, while Deportivo La Coruna, three points behind Betis, look capable of pushing for a place if they can only turn a few of their draws into victories. Atletico Madrid, too, are talking up their chances having racked up their 1000th victory in the top flight, against Sevilla. But then Atletico always talk a rather better game than they play.

Helping hands...Ronaldinho and Beckham

● A crowd of 40,000 turned out in Barcelona as FIFA and UEFA united to raise money for the victims of the Asian tsunami. A World XI, led by Ronaldinho and coached by Carlos Alberto Parreira and Frank Rijkaard, beat a Europe XI, led by Andrii Shevchenko and coached by Marcello Lippi and Arsene Wenger, 6-3.

Despite a crowded calendar, most of the world game's biggest names turned out: David Beckham and Zinedine Zidane were among the starters for Europe, while Samuel Eto'o, Kaka and Deco turned out for the World XI.

Eto'o (2), Ronaldinho, Henri Camara (2), and Cha Doo-ri scored for the World XI, with Alessandro Del Piero, Gianfranco Zola and David Suazo replying for Europe.

'We signed Ranieri in an abnormal situation. We had to act quickly to get someone'

Valencia president Juan Bautista Soler

Fired up under fire

Capello fights back as 'Juventus-bashing' takes hold

PADDY AGNEW in Rome

IF YOU LIVE long enough, you get to see everything. Over the years, I have had plenty of occasion to interview Fabio Capello, but rarely have I seen the Juventus coach as ecstatic after a win as when the Old Lady eliminated Real Madrid from the Champions League.

TV viewers saw his delight for themselves as he set off on a delirious celebration of Uruguayan Marcelo Zalayeta's 117th-minute winner. Capello's elation was understandable. This had been a match of awesome intensity if not eyecatching spectacle. It had also come after a sustained bout of Juventus-bashing, both from the media and rival players and managers, angered about everything from alleged refereeing bias to Juve's defensive, dour style to the Turin club's alleged involvement in an 'EPO' scandal.

The first setback for the Old Lady came in late February, from Judge Giuseppe Casalbore, the man who last November gave Juventus club doctor Ricardo Agricola a 22-month suspended sentence for having administered prohibited substances (EPO included) to Juventus team players between 1994 and 1998.

In his 326-page 'motivazioni' or judicial explanation (usually released two to three months after a trial, under the Italian legal system), Judge Casalbore had some pretty damning things to say about Juventus, their club doctor and their players. "There is no doubt whatsoever that...[Juventus] administered eritropoietina [EPO] to its players with a view to influencing athletic performance, thus altering the results of sports competitions," he wrote.

The judge accused Dr Agricola of having broken his Hippocratic oath in that he treated healthy, young Juventus players as "semi-ill" patients: "[Dr Agricola] bought and then administered 281 different pharmaceutical products, including doping agents, to healthy players."

Citing the evidence provided by independent medical expert Professor Giuseppe D'Onofrio, Judge Casalbore argued that the Juventus team doctor practised a "chronic use of EPO on most of the 20 players taken into consideration here". Among those 20 were Alessandro Del Piero, Antonio Conte, Angelo Di Livio, Ciro Ferrara, Gianluca Pessotto, Alessio Tacchinardi, Paolo Montero and Zinedine Zidane.

1-0, 2-0...Real Madrid keeper Iker Casillas looks on after David Trezeguet puts Juventus ahead in Turin; Capello (inset) then showed his elation after Marcelo Zalayeta's late clincher

Furthermore, the judge questioned the testimony of many of the famous footballer witnesses at the trial, saying their principal aim "was to support the things said by Agricola". With reference to a bleeding stomach ulcer suffered by Tacchinardi in October 1997, he wrote: "[Tacchinardi] made false statements in order to obscure just what had happened. Even though he had been seriously ill, vomiting blood and losing blood through his faeces, he cheerfully explained that he had been suffering from indigestion provoked by having consumed a frozen drink. It will be the state prosecutor's duty to find out just who advised the player to make such serious, if puerile, untrue statements."

For the time being, the Italian federation has taken no action re the Juventus judgement. Both the federation and CONI, the ruling body in Italian sport, have taken legal advice on the matter in Italy while they may yet take the case to the Tribunal of Sport in Lausanne. From the legal viewpoint, caution is urged by the fact that last November's judgement is currently being appealed and that it could take years to arrive at a definitive, final judgement. From the viewpoint of the federation's own regulations, it may be that all the alleged infringements will come under the Statute of Limitations, given that we are dealing with a period in the mid-1990s.

Hot night in March

If Judge Casalbore's reasonings represented a great day out for the Juve-bashers, the events of Saturday, March 5 prompted even more outraged indignation. That was the night when Juventus had travelled to play Roma while Milan, co-Serie A leaders with the Old Lady, were at Atalanta.

The Roma-Juventus game is rarely anything other than 'hot'. This year's fixture was rendered all the more intense because of the return to the Stadio Olimpico of three men – Capello, Brazilian midfielder Emerson and French defender Jonathan Zebina – who had made the surprise move from Roma to Juventus last summer. Some Roma fans were so charged with emotion that they stoned the Juventus bus when it arrived at the stadium. Hardly very sporting, but in the end rather stupid since they got the wrong bus – the one they attacked was carrying the Roma players.

Events on the pitch were to prove even worse. Referee Salvatore Racalbuto gave a master class in how not to handle a potentially explosive game. First, he failed to sanction the wildly over-physical attitude of Roma. Second, he failed to establish his authority when faced with outlandishly disrespectful players. Third, and worst of all, he awarded a highly dubious penalty to Juventus, which Del Piero converted to give his side a 2-1 win.

Earlier in the evening, referee Paolo Bertini had blotted his copy book in the Atalanta-Milan game. First, he failed to take action when, with the score at 1-1, Milan defender Alessandro Nesta pulled the shirt of Atalanta striker Stephen Makinwa, who had only goalkeeper Dida to beat. Then Bertini was generous with his time added on, during which Milan scored the winning goal through Andrea Pirlo, with the last kick of the game.

All of this prompted aggrieved Roma captain Francesco Totti to revive a familiar conspiracy theory – that Italian football is basically (mal) governed by a Juventus-Milan cartel who, when all else fails, can sway the referee. "It's difficult to play when there are 11 of you and 14 of them," said Totti. "Juventus win a lot because they have a good team and the [political] power to win...I could see the way things were going when Milan beat Atalanta...With things the way they are, you just lose heart."

His words, which may well earn him a severe disciplinary sanction, were not the last of the accusations sent Juve's way. On the eve of that titanic second leg tie with Real Madrid, Real's sports director Arrigo Sacchi spoke of the negative, destructive attitude of Italian teams, with particular reference to teams coached by Capello.

Given such a context, was it any wonder that the Juve coach reacted so enthusiastically to Zalayeta's goal?

Juve's 2-0 triumph (2-1 on aggregate) rounded off a remarkable winning week for Italian football, since the previous evening Milan had cruised past Manchester United 2-0 on aggregate after a home 1-0 win.

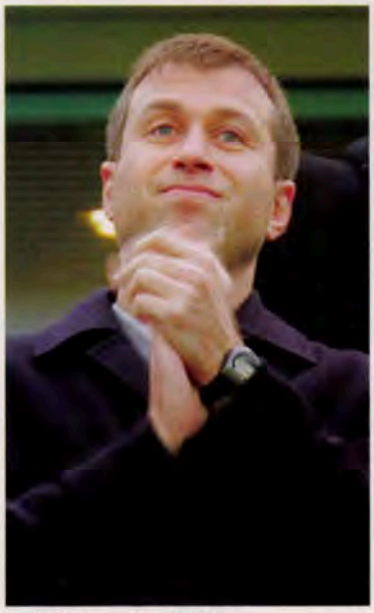
No one could claim that the Italian sides had not deserved to win against teams that, absurdly, came to Italy looking to do an Italian job on the country's two defensively strongest sides.

United were comprehensively outplayed in both legs by Milan's spider-web of possession, while Real, after looking stylish for a good half hour of their 1-0 win in Madrid, came to the Stadio delle Alpi cravenly looking for the 0-0 draw that would have seen them into the next round.

It may well be that the 2005 vintage of both Real and United is a long way short of their best years. It may well also be that neither of the visiting coaches – Sir Alex Ferguson and Vanderlei Luxemburgo – excelled themselves tactically. It was strange to watch two of Europe's traditionally most attacking sides opt to play a canny game. In the case of United, this meant not only allowing Milan to dictate their own hypnotic possession game but also playing Wayne Rooney in a deep-lying, almost midfield role that seemed to deprive United of their most potent weapon.

In the case of Real, it was like taking a Ferrari sports car and opting to drive it round the race track in reverse.

In the end, both Italian sides won without the help of their best players, Czech midfielder Pavel Nedved for Juventus and Ukraine striker Andrii Shevchenko for Milan. With a view to the quarter-finals, one can only say that things are looking good from the Italian viewpoint.



Youthful gaze...Abramovich

● Atalanta have long been held in high repute for the quality of players that come through their youth team programmes. The point has not been lost on Roman Abramovich's Chelsea, who have gone looking for two of the most recent talents to emerge from the academy – 17-year-old defender Michele Rinaldi and 16-year-old striker Cristian Tiboni.

Only last December, Atalanta had to move quickly to secure the services of young keeper Andrea Consigli, putting him on a four-year contract after being contacted by Arsenal. Now, Chelsea's show of interest has prompted no little discomfort at Atalanta, with club boss Ivan Ruggeri even threatening not to allow his talents to play for the Italian Under-16 and Under-18 teams so as not to expose them to unwanted publicity and prying talent scouts.

'It's difficult to play when there are 11 of you and 14 of them'

Francesco Totti cries foul after his Roma side lose to Juventus

Clean-up mission

FIFA intervenes as CAF fails to keep its house in order

MARK GLEESON in Johannesburg

AT LEAST SIX people died as violence and panic erupted during the last round of African World Cup qualifiers in October.

A crush for tickets caused several deaths in Guinea ahead of their match with Morocco, although the country's football officials and FIFA later denied this, and there were deaths as the crowd panicked when the lights went out in the stadium where Togo had just finished their game against Mali.

In Liberia, widespread looting and even an attack on UN peacekeeping troops followed the country's 3-0 home defeat by Senegal, and angry fans in Benin and Malawi also rioted after poor performances by their national sides.

Finally something is being done to sort out the decrepit stadiums and outdated security systems that are such a liability in African football. But the move to try to avoid a repeat of the senseless deaths has come not from the African confederation but rather from FIFA.

It is just another example of the growing impatience in Zurich with those who run the African game and remain callously silent even in the wake of such tragedies.

The highly-politicised agenda of the leadership of the Cairo-based Confederation of African Football renders it almost powerless to take any concrete action to try to remedy the ills of the game on

The fans come first... as CAF dithers, FIFA is taking measures to rid Africa of its outdated, potentially dangerous stadiums

the continent. President Issa Hayatou and his executive committee have failed year after year to address issues such as poor facilities, bumpy pitches, inadequate or non-existent security, age-cheating and the expedient issuing of passports to foreign players to bolster national teams.

Hayatou is careful not to alienate any of his powerful members so as to keep his position at the head of CAF. In so doing he has effectively ceded control of the game in Africa to FIFA.

It helps Sepp Blatter's agenda that he has become a virtual paymaster for the largely destitute African associations, through the £500,000 each association gets every four years from FIFA's Financial Assistance Programme and the help with building vital infrastructure that comes from the GOAL project.

Shenanigans

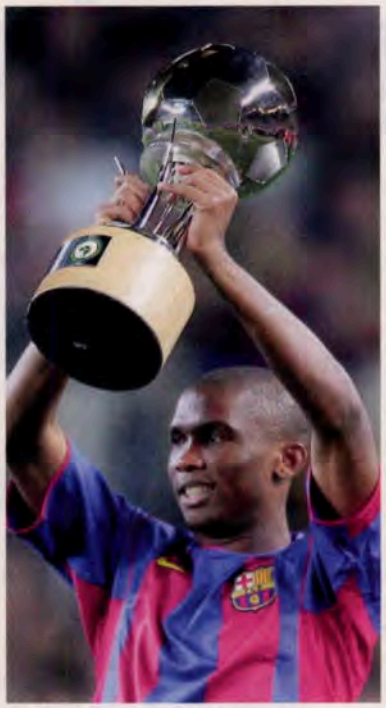
FIFA is now much more in tune with the endless shenanigans in Africa. Zurich now has its own development officer for the continent in former UN employee Pascal Torres. He constantly jets around Africa putting out political fires and checking on good governance and spending policies. FIFA deputy secretary-general Jerome Champagne spends a good deal of his time on the telephone networking with African association presidents, much to the chagrin of the continent's confederation.

The contrast is stark between the world body's proactive approach and CAF's inactivity, with the African confederation a virtual sideline observer of its own show.

Blatter, confident in his support from the Third World constituency, now has the political will and financial muscle to take on major issues and, in particular, African governments, who for so long have been a destabilising influence on the growth of the continent's football.

FIFA has now decided to inspect stadiums and check on security arrangements in countries with a past history of incompetence. The inspection of four African stadiums in February – in Kinshasa (DR Congo), Yaounde (Cameroon), Bamako (Mali) and Dakar (Senegal) – is to be followed by more in April and there is every likelihood FIFA will shortly start condemning venues no longer good enough to host internationals.

Countries such as Cameroon, which has poor stadiums and infrastructure despite its many World Cup finals appearances, could be forced to cede home advantage in future fixtures if their facilities are not drastically repaired or rebuilt.



Devalued winner...Eto'o

● Cameroonian Samuel Eto'o won a second successive African Footballer of the Year award, ahead of Nigeria's Jay-Jay Okocha and South African favourite Benni McCarthy. But the Barcelona forward hardly received a ringing endorsement, with only 27 of the 53 people eligible to vote – the African national team bosses – bothering to return their ballots. Eto'o did not travel to Durban to pick up his award, opting instead to play for Ronaldinho's team in the FIFA tsunami benefit match on the same night. In fact, fewer than half the award winners turned up for the CAF gala night, making the whole event an anti-climax.

Different attitudes

Last year, there was a concrete demonstration of the different attitudes of Hayatou and Blatter to preserving the integrity of the game.

During the qualifiers for the 2004 African Nations Cup finals, Togo used five Brazil-born players in several matches, drawing official protests from their opponents. The mercenaries had been imported by coach Antonio Dumas specifically for the qualifying matches, having absolutely no connection with Togo before their arrival.

But CAF washed its hands of the farce, claiming it was unable to take any action because the players had been given legitimate passports by the Togolese government. The same thing happened in Mauritania, whose French coach, Noel Tosi, made no secret of the fact he encouraged officials to give instant nationality to several players from his old French club Creteil to strengthen the Mauritania side.

But when Qatar tried the same trick by offering Ailton, then of Werder Bremen, and other Brazilians a passport and £500,000 to play for the oil-rich country in the World Cup qualifiers, FIFA quickly stepped in to ban the practice.

Africa's other bugbear is age-group cheating, so difficult to prove and still prevalent. This is an issue in which both CAF and FIFA seem to be making little progress, even though more and more African countries are now admitting they cheated heavily in the past. Such admissions have eroded the value of the triumphs of the likes of Ghana and Nigeria in past youth world championships.

CAF caught out Tanzania recently and expelled them from the African Under-17 Championship after finding they had used a player who also appeared in the African Champions League a year earlier but had given a different date of birth.

But such is the impunity with which associations feel they can cheat that Tanzania have even had the audacity to protest, believing they can dupe CAF into changing the decision. We await Cairo's response with interest.

'The contrast is stark between the world body's proactive approach and CAF inactivity'

Taking a stand

Sid Lowe on the Barcelona striker who refuses to stay silent about racism

STAMFORD BRIDGE CAME as rather less of a surprise than the headlines suggested. Cheeky-grinned, utterly loveable and refreshingly, if sometimes foolishly, honest, Samuel Eto'o has always worn his heart on his sleeve and has long since come unhinged quicker than a DIY wardrobe.

That the Cameroonian should react as he did, becoming involved in pushing and shoving near the players' tunnel and then railing against Chelsea, was not altogether unusual. Especially as he spent much of the second half growing increasingly frustrated, racing around trying to right the world. Eto'o is a player of drive and spirit, with an almost pathological will to win, as well as a history of losing his rag and a keen sense of justice. And injustice.

Consider the evidence. There was the time he employed a classic schoolboy trick – the one that consists of indicating "OK, OK, I've calmed down now" before sprinting like mad – to break from his restrainers and butting Valencia midfielder Miguel Angel Angulo. Or his Christmas-time, pantomime-style boot up the backside of Barcelona's Thiago Motta. Or the time he scared his agent by stealing his shoes – a gesture considered a death threat in Cameroon. He has always played with a hint of crusade, an edge that makes him an even better footballer.

Nor has he been slow to say what he really thinks. When Eto'o became Real Mallorca's all-time leading scorer, he dedicated the feat to "all those who love me", helpfully adding: "Everyone else can screw themselves." He responded to the arrival of David Beckham in Spain by insisting (and subsequently proving): "He might be more handsome than me, but I am a better player." And he reacted to intrusion into his lifestyle in Mallorca by grinning and saying: "Look, if I want to go and watch a striptease, I'll go and watch a striptease."

So good were his performances on the pitch that he could hardly be accused of letting himself go – and he knew it. Eto'o has always been very sure of his ability, which is part of the reason for his continued battle with Real Madrid, where he started his European career at the age of 16 and where, he feels, he did not get the opportunities his talents deserved. When he scored two goals for Mallorca at the Bernabeu last season, he celebrated by racing round the pitch pointing at the turf. The message was clear: "I was here; I could have been playing for you."

Madrid's then sporting director Jorge Valdano called it a gesture of *acercamiento* (reconciliation); some of the press chose to interpret it as a come-and-get-me plea. It was nothing of the sort. The message Eto'o wanted to convey was: "Look what you could have had. I used to be here, now you'll never have me back."

That much was proven by his determination to go to Barcelona in the summer. Even as Madrid, who owned half of his registration, fought dirty, Eto'o held firm, remained absolutely single-minded. A weaker player might have caved in, not Eto'o. For him, a proud man who felt shabbily treated by Madrid, it had become a question of right and wrong.

And that is the point: underpinning Eto'o's willingness to talk honestly, his flare-ups and occasional rushes of blood is a very keen sense of justice, self-identity and self-worth. There is no apology for his opinions, or his actions, and why should there be one?

'If they treat me like a monkey, I'm going to dance like a monkey'

Eto'o explains his goal celebration away to Zaragoza

Especially as Eto'o believes he was racially abused at Stamford Bridge. Whether or not he correctly heard the phrase "monkey", as he claimed (Eto'o does not speak English), is not the point, at least not entirely. Since race became such a live issue following the comments from Spain coach Luis Aragones about Thierry Henry, the Spain-England game and the subsequent, sad fashion for ooh-oohing black players, Eto'o has been in the front line.

Bold and brave

The Cameroonian has arguably suffered more than any other player in Spain and taken a far bolder, braver, outspoken and in all probability more effective stance than his colleagues. While he initially tried to measure his words, there have been few bland platitudes; there have instead, when he has been irritated or saddened, been strong responses backed by a real force of conviction. Eto'o is a man very conscious and very proud of being black; he talks of wanting to win titles in Europe in order to prove that there is talent in Africa.

He has stood firm; why should he just take it? Eto'o has defended Aragones, who coached him at Mallorca, insisting he is not a racist, but he has been unequivocal on the outbreak of abuse since. If he kept quiet maybe he would enjoy an easier life, but by biting back he is making people take notice. The impact is far greater, more positive. He is not looking out for his own status, by treading carefully. And he is getting more abuse for it.

Last month, when Eto'o scored in Zaragoza, he hopped up and down like a monkey, his hands tucked under his armpits, an ooh-ooh on his lips. "If they treat me like a monkey, I'm going to dance like a monkey," he said. Afterwards, he complained that if the referee had been black "they'd have killed him". People actually took notice. Anyone can mouth something about how racism isn't very nice. That is not Eto'o's style. It never has been. And hopefully it never will be.

In his defence...Eto'o has said Aragones, his coach at former club Mallorca, is not a racist

Top scorers

1 Vincenzo Montella

Roma's comeback king

REVENGE, ITALIANS LIKE to say, is a dish best eaten cold. If that is the case, then current leading Serie A goalscorer Vincenzo Montella has done a lot of happy chewing recently.

The latest chapter in the Montella story began last summer when, to the surprise of some, Roma hawked their star striker up and down Italy, trying to offload him. Even more surprisingly, no club was seriously interested. It seemed that many, at Roma and elsewhere, had decided that at 30 years of age and with just five Serie A goals in the 2003-04 season, Montella was yesterday's man.

By the end of February, the cynics were having to think again. Leading the national scorers' chart with 19 goals, five clear of both Ukraine bullet Andrii Shevchenko and Brazilian Adriano, Montella had also gone top of the all-time Serie A scorers' chart for players still playing with 131 goals, four clear of his rival and good friend Christian Vieri.

Furthermore, the Roma striker had also played himself back into the national team. Montella won his 20th cap in the February friendly against Russia in Cagliari (won 2-0), a game that coach Marcello Lippi clearly used as preparation for Italy's end-of-March World Cup qualifier against Scotland at the San Siro.

Montella's renaissance is all the more remarkable if one considers that his Roma side have had a difficult season, marked by the arrival and subsequent rapid departure of two coaches, Cesare Prandelli and then German Rudi Voller, prior to the appointment of current incumbent Gigi Del Neri. On the field, Roma have been less than consistent in Serie A and endured a disastrous Champions League campaign – five defeats and one draw in their six group games, plus UEFA sanctions after referee Anders Frisk suffered a head wound when hit by an object thrown from the crowd during the home game against Kyiv Dynamo.

Montella has made the most of playing alongside captain Francesco Totti and the talented Antonio Cassano. While Roma have flapped and fuddled, he has kept on scoring, usually with his refined and immensely accurate left foot.

The forward has had a complicated relationship with the Roman club ever since joining them from Sampdoria in the summer of 1999 for £14million. For a start, the Roma coach who originally advised the club to buy him was Czech Zdenek Zeman, yet by the time Montella got to the capital, Zeman had been sacked, replaced by Fabio Capello.

Even though Montella scored 18 goals in that first season, Capello informed the club that if they were serious about winning the championship, then they had better buy a new striker. Montella simply did not convince the coach.

Thus it was that Roma splashed out £18m in the summer of 2000 for Fiorentina's Argentinian ace Gabriel Batistuta.

Montella was not amused. After various experiments, it soon became clear that Capello's first-choice strikeforce comprised Batistuta flanked by Marco Delvecchio wide on the left and supported by Totti. Consequently, Montella was destined to start many games in that title-winning season on the bench.

Intelligently used by Capello, Montella still made a huge contribution, becoming the club's supersub by scoring 13 goals (Batistuta hit 20). But being regularly relegated to the bench does not go down well with any player and Montella made his frustration clear for everyone to see when he angrily kicked a plastic bottle in Capello's direction during a game against Napoli right at the climax of that 2000-01 title contest.

With Batistuta's star very much in fade mode over the next two seasons, Montella should have been able to capitalise on his excellent form of the scudetto-winning season. However, injuries and personal problems, including the break-up of his marriage, got in the way. Last season, he played in only 11 Serie A games for Roma, scoring that meagre total of five goals.

Having climbed his way back to the top of the greasy pole now, you might expect Montella to make conciliatory noises about the past. Yet, he has never been one to mouth platitudes. When Batistuta arrived, he was less than pleased and said so. When Capello unexpectedly upped and left for Juventus last summer, he commented laconically: "He has now shown the Roma fans the same lack of respect that he showed me for the past five years."

Asked recently if he felt he had won less in his career than his potential merited, his answer was illuminating: "To be a winner, you don't have to hold up

FACT FILE

Club	Roma
Country	Italy
Born	June 18, 1974, in Pomigliano d'Arco
Previous clubs	Empoli, Genoa, Sampdoria
International debut	June 1999, v Wales
International caps	20 (3 goals)
Honours	Italian League 2001

Flying again...Montella has refound his best form this season

a cup or a winner's medal. In my opinion, there are people in football who win a lot and they're still losers, while there are plenty who lose a lot and are still winners. For me, it's more important that people respect me as a person than as a footballer."

Montella is the type who quite clearly may forgive but will never forget. For example, Roma 'team director' Franco Baldini was the prime mover in the campaign to sell Montella last summer. Ironically, it's Baldini's future at Roma that's now in some doubt. Asked about Baldini recently, Montella commented: "Team directors come and go all the time in football clubs, but it has nothing to do with me..."

As we said, revenge is a dish best eaten cold.

Paddy Agnew

Shining example...Kuijt's goals have brightened Feyenoord's dismal season

2 Dirk Kuijt

Feyenoord's free-scoring front-man

IN A DEEPLY unsatisfactory season during which Feyenoord have had to play second fiddle to PSV Eindhoven, AZ Alkmaar and Ajax, the goals galore of Dirk Kuijt have been the only ray of light to penetrate the overcast Rotterdam sky.

While it may be slightly early to compare Kuijt with some of the great Feyenoord front-men of the past, the 24-year-old Dutch international has without question made his mark in the famous red-and-white halved shirts since arriving from Utrecht in the summer of 2003. He scored 20 goals last season and is grabbing close to a goal a game this term.

It is not just the opportunism and the thumping right-footed shooting that have endeared Kuijt to Feyenoord fans. Rotterdam is very much a blue-collar town, where football-lovers demand industry, commitment and self-sacrifice from their players. In these categories, Kuijt ticks all the boxes.

Some in Holland have suggested the forward might lack a layer of technical polish. But new Holland boss Marco Van Basten is obviously not one of them, giving the Feyenoord man his first cap against Liechtenstein last September and being sufficiently impressed to keep him in the side for subsequent World Cup qualifiers.

Speculation is mounting that Kuijt may soon leave Feyenoord, with Liverpool and Barcelona both reported to have been interested in signing him during the January transfer window. Mark Wotte, the *Rotterdammer* technical director, will be hard-pressed to retain the prolific front-man for much longer.

Nick Bidwell

FACT FILE

Club	Feyenoord
Country	Holland
Born	July 22, 1980, in Katwijk
Previous clubs	Quick Boys Katwijk, Utrecht
International debut	September 2004, v Liechtenstein
International caps	6 (1 goal)
Honours	Dutch Cup 2003 (Utrecht)

The entertainer...Liedson offers silky technique and assured finishing

Ghosting in...Mintal has the knack of bursting into the box at the right time

3 Liedson

Brazilian showman at Sporting Lisbon

FIVE YEARS AGO, Liedson was stacking shelves in a Brazilian supermarket. Now the Sporting Lisbon striker is successfully racking up another commodity – goals.

After emerging as a proven taker of chances for top Rio side Flamengo and Corinthians of Sao Paulo, Liedson was snapped up by Sporting for £1.4million in June 2003. He has kept up the good work on this side of the Atlantic, hitting 15 Portuguese League goals last season and adding a further 18 in the opening two-thirds of the current campaign.

When Liedson first arrived in Portugal, much of the local media felt he was simply too slender of build to cope in the top division, that he would never stand up to the buffeting meted out by hard-tackling defenders. How wrong they were.

Liedson's speed, silky technique and assured finishing with head and foot have proved too much for most would-be markers, while he has also made a contribution in the creativity department, dropping deep to combine well with star midfielders Carlos Martins and Hugo Viana.

Liedson – or 'Liedshow' as he has been dubbed by Sporting fans – does have his faults. He can be argumentative with team-mates – he clashed recently with former Portugal attacker Sa Pinto over who should take a penalty; his tendency to retaliate and to speak out of turn to referees has resulted in one red and eight yellow cards this season; and he had Sporting boss Jose Peseiro hopping mad after returning one week late from the Christmas holidays. Peseiro threatened to drop him for the Lisbon derby with Benfica but he must have been glad that he did not, Liedson hitting both goals in the 2-1 victory.

Sporting have a good reason to indulge the Brazilian. When he scores, they normally win.

Nick Bidwell

FACT FILE

Club Sporting Lisbon (Por)
Country Brazil
Born December 17, 1977, in Cairu

4 Marek Mintal

Nurnberg's 'Phantom' marksman

THE RECENT ASSERTION of Nurnberg midfielder Mario Cantaluppi that "we are not FC Mintal" is not one that carries too much weight. Slovak attacking midfielder Marek Mintal has been responsible for almost half of Nurnberg's goal output this season – by the end of February he had notched 18 of their 38 League goals – and, in the eyes of many, has been the newly-promoted club's life-support system.

The 27-year-old, who lines up in an advanced position in central midfield, is not at all the classic playmaker; Slovakia's Player of the Year for 2004 prefers tireless running and simple, short passes to creative flair. It is easy to see why he has been dubbed 'The Phantom' by team-mates. One moment he is out of the picture, the next he has burst free into the box, normally the prelude for a powerful, accurate shot.

"Marek is a phenomenon," says Nurnberg coach Wolfgang Wolf. "I set him a target of 10 goals at the start of this season and he has already smashed it."

Mintal, who joined Nurnberg in June 2003 from Slovak club MSK Zilina, is in line to win the Bundesliga top scorer's award, just as he twice won the Slovak Golden Boot (with 21 goals in 2001-02 and 20 in 2002-03) with Zilina, while last term he was the leading marksman in the German Second Division with 18 goals.

History says that prolific scorers in Germany's second tier usually see their goal count drop dramatically when they make the step up to the Bundesliga. Mintal is the exception to prove the rule.

Nick Bidwell

FACT FILE

Club Nurnberg (Ger)
Country Slovakia
Born September 2, 1977, in Zilina
Previous club MSK Zilina
International debut February 2002, v Iran
International caps 23 (4 goals)
Honours Slovak League 2002, 2003

Danger man...Fatih (left) puts Rodolfo of Kyiv Dynamo under pressure

Feelgood factor...Lopez is congratulated by Racing team-mates after another goal

5 Fatih Tekke

The Trabzonspor predator

NOT FOR NOTHING are the Trabzonspor attacking triumvirate of Fatih Tekke, Gokdeniz Karadeniz and Ibrahim Yattara known as the 'Bermuda Triangle'. With Gokdeniz and Yattara supplying the invention and Fatih snapping up chance after chance, championship-chasing Trabzonspor have regularly forced opponents to experience that sinking feeling.

Fatih, quick of thought and movement, is a natural-born predator. "He has unbelievable ability in the danger zone," says Trabzonspor coach Senol Gunes, the former Turkey boss. "A lot of strikers can't cope with really close marking. Fatih is different. He can come off the toughest markers very easily."

The 27-year-old, who joined Trabzonspor from Gaziantepspor in summer 2002, does have his critics, however. A commonly-heard complaint is that he only piles up the goals against weaker sides.

Fortunately for the forward, there are more admirers than detractors. French sides Lyon and Paris Saint-Germain, and Germany's Werder Bremen, Schalke and Bayer Leverkusen are just a selection of overseas clubs apparently prepared to pay the price for him – said to be £4.2million. Meanwhile, Turkey coach Ersun Yanal has earmarked Fatih as the successor to Hakan Sukur at the point of the national team's attack, a decision vindicated by three World Cup qualifying goals this season.

Over seven years after making his first appearance for Turkey, Fatih has finally cast aside his image as an international stop-gap.

Nick Bidwell

FACT FILE

Club	Trabzonspor
Country	Turkey
Born	September 9, 1977, in Surmene
Previous clubs	Altay, Gaziantepspor
International debut	January 1998, v Albania
International caps	10 (3 goals)
Honours	Turkish Cup 2003, 2004

6 Lisandro Lopez

Racing Club's country star

RACING CLUB'S Lisandro Lopez finished as top scorer, with 12 goals, in Argentina's opening championship at the end of last year. Unlike most of the country's other Golden Shoe winners of recent years, he was not immediately sold to a European club, but according to Racing's senior team co-ordinator, Emilio Commisso, it can only be a matter of time before they come calling.

"I always knew he would make the grade, but what he is doing this season is really impressive," says Commisso. "He is excellent out wide but can have a similar impact through the middle, he sets up chances and also helps win the ball back when we lose possession. He's the most complete striker I've seen. I have no doubt that he will be noticed by leading clubs and the phone will soon start ringing to ask about a transfer."

Lopez is a country boy, from the little town of Rafael Obligado in Buenos Aires province, but he was far from overawed when given his first-team chance at capital club Racing by then coach Ossie Ardiles in 2003.

"I enjoy my football," says the 22-year-old, who was discovered by Racing playing in the annual Buenos Aires provincial junior games in 2001. "But I realise that as a professional sometimes you can't enjoy it, with all the pressure and with fans insulting you when you lose the ball or make a bad pass."

It's a mature attitude that is serving him well in Argentina and will help him just as much if and when a big European club come in for him.

Eric Weil

FACT FILE

Club	Racing Club
Country	Argentina
Born	March 2, 1983, in Rafael Obligado

Balancing act

On the eve of the new season in an expanded MLS, Paul Gardner talks to the League's main men – commissioner Don Garber and deputy commissioner Ivan Gazidis

You're entering your 10th season – what's looking good for MLS now?
Garber: We've achieved credibility, viability and permanence. What we're looking to do now is to increase our popularity, our profitability and our cultural significance.

There's one important area where we've had more success than we expected at this stage, and that's in the building of stadiums. Every sport requires a permanent home – in this country you can't imagine baseball without Yankee stadium or basketball without Madison Square Garden. In soccer, you think of Barcelona and Nou Camp, Manchester United and Old Trafford.

So we've been creating our own homes. By 2007 we hope to have seven soccer-specific stadiums. We have Los Angeles and Columbus, Dallas is under construction, and we hope to add stadiums for DC United, the MetroStars, Chicago and Real Salt Lake.

Soccer needs a specific environment, and of course the stadiums increase income.
Gazidis: Another very significant positive is our collective bargaining agreement. We had a contentious relationship with our players over the first eight years, so this is a tremendous step forward. It gives us five years of labour peace.

And the problem areas? No one is making any money yet, right?
Garber: We're managing a viable business in a very competitive arena where we've got to be smart. It's a huge challenge – this is probably the most competitive sports market in the world.

Hang on…Gazidis fears the departure of young talent

We have 12 teams, and one of them – the Los Angeles Galaxy – should break even or make money this year. A large part of the reason for that is that they have a terrific stadium.

Certainly one of our problems is maintaining a balance between signing good players and maintaining fiscal responsibility. It's getting more and more expensive to do business.
Gazidis: We're a victim of our own success on the player front. Over the past two or three years the level of interest in American players throughout the soccer world has accelerated rapidly. Partly that is the result of the success of the US national team, but it also includes successful young MLS players, not necessarily Americans – for example, Carlos Ruiz and Damani Ralph. We face a big challenge in trying to hang on to our young stars, because, financially, we're a small player on the world scene.

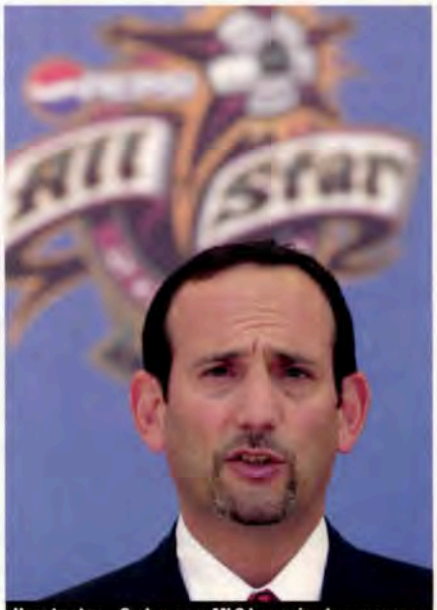
But you make money when you sell players.
Garber: Yes, but we have no agenda to cover costs or make money from selling players. When the occasion arises that we're forced to sell, then obviously we want the highest possible value. The money we receive goes into the League's player budget; it's used to sign new players or for longer contracts.

Looking at another source of income, what is the expansion fee? How much did the two new clubs this year, Chivas USA and Real Salt Lake, pay for the rights to operate a team?
Garber: The current fee is $10million [£5.2m]. When we add two more teams in 2007, it will be more. For 2007 we have interest from Cleveland, San Antonio, Houston and Seattle, and from Toronto.

Canada? Will FIFA allow teams from outside the country to participate?
Garber: We'll work with FIFA and CONCACAF on that. Our understanding is that it will be acceptable if the other country has no pro league, which Canada does not.

Aside from financial stability, what do you require from potential franchise holders?
Garber: They must have an acceptable stadium or a stadium plan. And they must be people who believe in the sport. We're not looking for real estate developers.

Is there interest from other foreign countries?
Garber: Chivas USA [counterpart of Mexican club Guadalajara, nicknamed Chivas] have already had some commercial success with selling local TV rights and season tickets. They're being watched closely by other Mexican clubs – we've had interest from Club America and UNAM Pumas.



Here to stay…Garber says MLS has gained permanence

What about Europe and South America?
Gazidis: I think the super-clubs – Real, Man U, for instance – are finding that their traditional revenue sources of income will no longer grow at past rates. They're looking for new avenues of growth, they're looking globally – particularly at China and the USA. Here, they feel they need a permanent presence, not just the occasional tour. This is what Chivas are doing – they'll hope to have a Chivas fan club in every MLS city; and that model could be even more dramatic for a European super-club or for a South American club like Boca Juniors.

Does the MLS's single entity structure deter overseas interest?
Garber: There's no doubt that it is a foreign idea to international clubs. But we operate in a very different environment; single entity enables us to grow our League – indeed, it is serving as a model for other sports leagues. It gives us what I call strategic flexibility.

Do you anticipate modifying the system?
Garber: Our board of directors can change things, and we regularly adjust the rules. The system is all about the League office providing guidance to our board.
Gazidis: I think we can adjust the system in ways that would address most of the objections.

With two more clubs this season, and expanded roster sizes, you'll need about 100 more pro-level players. Where are they coming from?
Gazidis: Identifying young players is an unreliable business, especially in a huge country like the USA. We made a start with our Project-40 programme in 1996, but that was not comprehensive enough. We need now to open our doors to a wider variety of players – we believe there is tremendous talent out there that is not being identified.

This year each club will have a reserve team. They will play each other and other club teams – we think about 12 games in all – and we may stage a reserve team all-star game.

One of the problems with Project-40 was that if the players were not good enough for the first team, they got no playing time. The reserve team programme solves that problem. The youngsters whom we sign to pro contracts will receive money from a college fund to continue their education.

These youngsters – they are the ones you're calling Generation Adidas?
Gazidis: Yes. We have a 10-year, $150m [£78m] deal with Adidas, and they will help the young players in many ways, through their links with clubs all round the world.

When you talk about talent that has previously been overlooked, you're talking primarily about Hispanic players?
Gazidis: Our hope is that Chivas USA will be successful in its search for Hispanic talent, and that other coaches will be driven to explore this area more aggressively. We have recently appointed former MetroStars coach Alfonso Mondelo to serve as our connection with Hispanic soccer, both within the USA and outside – for recruiting players in Central America, for instance.
Garber: This nation is now undergoing a big demographic change, with a new wave of immigration coming mostly from the south – fortunately for us, it's from soccer-playing countries. We have a great opportunity with the 70 million Hispanics in this country, and with the position of soccer as a grassroots sport. I can't think of another sport that is so significant in family life.

Home banker...Los Angeles Galaxy are close to break-even thanks largely to the income from their stadium

Are you satisfied with the level of play in MLS?
Gazidis: We aim to do better in three areas: competition, entertainment and diversity. We want to up the number of games against international teams, and we think that the larger rosters will mean more competition for starting places within teams.

We must have an entertaining brand of soccer. We're concerned that the number of goals has gone down over the past two seasons. If we simply rely on athletics and effort, that will not be enough. We need an attractive game, and diversity is part of that. We don't want interchangeable teams, we don't want a league full of cookie-cutter players.
Garber: We're also looking for diversity of ownership – that's what Chivas USA brings us.

And the coaches?
Gazidis: Yes, our coaching staffs need to be more diverse.

'We need an attractive game. We don't want interchangeable teams, we don't want a league full of cookie-cutter players'

Ivan Gazidis

Are you concerned that your attendance level is stagnant?
Garber: That's not fair. We've grown modestly, and we're expecting to continue to move forward positively. We've a long way to go before we have the 50 million soccer-interested people in this country coming to our games, but we've only just started. I'm not concerned at all.

Well, one way of increasing attendance would surely be to pay more money for better players, no?
Gazidis: We can't compete for every young player.
Garber: We'll spend what we need to spend to get the best possible product, but raising salaries across the board doesn't achieve what we want. The key is for the League to step forward with money for important signings.

The signings have been rather disappointing, though. Last season you had only two Brazilians in the League. But you had three New Zealanders. Is that a recipe for exciting soccer?
Gazidis: True, Brazilians, for whatever reason, have not done well in MLS. One of the factors is that we don't have a salary scale to attract them. Nor do we have the budget for a scouting operation of, say, $100,000 to $200,000 [£52,000 to £104,000] a year. But...yes, having more Brazilians would be a good thing for our League.

Searching for a style

MLS must up its excitement levels, says Paul Gardner

MLS ASSURES us that it is determined to find ways of making its soccer (its product, or its brand, as the organisation is wont to call it) more entertaining.

Of course the League is right: it does operate – as commissioner Don Garber points out – in a highly competitive sports environment. It needs to attract attention, it needs to be noticed, it needs more excitement, and it needs it where it matters most: on the field of play.

Now we're talking about coaches and players. MLS coaches are hardly among the world's most adventurous. Last season they fielded teams that, on the whole, were not notable for wild excitement. Los Angeles Galaxy – to their credit – did something about it. They fired coach Sigi Schmid mid-season, with his team sitting firmly top of the standings; but Galaxy were looking for a more attacking game.

Another coach – Tim Hankinson of Colorado Rapids – was ditched at the season's end. But that was it. Colin Clarke, who coached Dallas to another woeful season, retained his job, as did Bob Bradley, despite two underachieving years at MetroStars.

The League's two new teams – Chivas USA and Real Salt Lake – bring two new coaches. Except that they're not new: Thomas Rongen, at Chivas, has coached in MLS before, while Salt Lake's John Ellinger has been coach at the US federation's Bradenton Under-17 academy since 1999. Neither would head any list of daring mentors.

More significantly, neither is Hispanic. That Chivas – devoted to creating a Hispanic club within MLS – should choose Dutchman Rongen defies explanation. Even so, MLS does now have one Hispanic coach – Fernando Clavijo, the Uruguayan who played in the 1994 US World Cup team and has replaced Hankinson at Colorado.

Age no limit

Player signings remain the League's biggest problem. The money is not there for the big names. When a name does appear, it's likely to be one at the end of a famous career. Last season, the 'name' signing was 35-year-old Austrian Andreas Herzog. He's no longer around, having struggled with the heat, the travel and the turmoil at Galaxy. This year, MetroStars have pushed the age limit higher by bringing in 37-year-old Youri Djorkaeff.

The ex-French international was introduced to the press with all the customary assurances about attitude and fitness and leadership. But if MLS wants to escape not merely the accusation but also the reality of being an elephants' graveyard it should not really be signing players of this age.

There are younger players available, particularly in Central America, the best of whom combine excellent technique with being affordable. As a former national coach of Costa Rica, Steve Sampson – who took over from Schmid at Galaxy – is well informed about such players, and has brought in Guatemalan midfielder Guillermo Ramirez and Costa Rican defender Michael Umana.

Chicago Fire coach Dave Sarachan has shown a sudden interest in Hispanic players, signing two Hondurans – defender Samuel Caballero and midfielder Ivan Guerrero – as well as Brazilian midfielder Thiago Gaucho.

Brazilians are rarities in MLS, and for a League that openly declares its interest in entertaining soccer, their virtual absence is almost criminal. In 2004, MLS had two Brazilians – Galaxy's Saragosa and MetroStars' Gilberto, both defensive midfielders. Saragosa will not be returning, a sad example of MLS's inability to hang on to promising youngsters.

An even worse example is the departure of MetroStars' 22-year-old midfielder Joselito Vaca, who has returned to Bolivia. Small, skilful Bolivians evidently do not rate highly with MLS coaches.

A look at this year's so-called Super Draft shows their preference – the likes of 6ft American Danny O'Rourke, selected by San Jose Earthquakes, who comes with the accolade of being "one of the toughest players and best ball winners in college soccer".

Salt Lake coach Ellinger got first choice at the draft and picked 16-year-old Nikolas Besagno – described by MLS as "not afraid to go into a tough tackle". Yet the truly alarming thing about Besagno's selection was the fact that an unknown 16-year-old high school player should be considered a bigger prize than all the college talent available.

This is an unhappy state of affairs for MLS, which – with its expansion from 10 to 12 clubs and its increase in the size of rosters – will need about 100 more pro-level players for 2005.

Expansion brings with it a potential dilution of talent. MLS is betting that there is plenty of unmined talent in the USA, meaning, mainly, Hispanic talent. Which is where Chivas USA have a vital role to play. While their initial roster will be heavy with players from Mexico, the home of parent club Guadalajara, they are committed to finding Hispanic talent in the USA.

They want to field a team that plays Latin-style soccer – a laudable aim, but one that brings a risk that MLS doesn't need: the possibility of a soccer culture war. If Chivas win games playing a more skill-oriented game than the other MLS teams are used to, what will be their response? History, tradition and experience suggests it will be to play more physically against Chivas. In one of their pre-season games, Chivas got a warning of what may be in store: their devastating 7-0 loss to the US national team was a rugged game during which two Chivas players were stretchered off.

'If MLS wants to escape the reality of being an elephants' graveyard it should not really be signing 37-year-old players like Djorkaeff'

Going Dutch...Rongen leads 'Hispanic' side Chivas

Refs' crucial role

The possibility that Chivas will face 'take no prisoners' opposition must be of concern to MLS. Refereeing will play a crucial role. MLS referees are appointed by the US federation, but MLS obviously has a hefty say about the way in which they officiate. "We're trying to promote the things that the fans find exciting, and to prevent what kills the game," says MLS deputy commissioner Ivan Gazidis. "That means protecting the skilled players by punishing – harshly – intimidating fouls, persistent fouling and tactical fouling."

The tricky bit will come if teams believe Chivas are being over-protected by the officials. And if Chivas believe they're not getting the decisions they should be will it lead to diving or retaliatory fouling?

That's MLS: a league in search of a style. All in all, 2005 will be a challenging year for MLS, its teams, its coaches, its players...and its referees.

● *See World Service for MLS fixtures.*

EASTERN CONFERENCE – TEAM BY TEAM

CHICAGO FIRE

After his team failed – for the first time in their seven-year history – to make the play-offs last year, coach Dave Sarachan has a lot of rebuilding to do. Gone are the club's veteran goalscorer Ante Razov, midfielder Andy Williams and defenders Evan Whitfield and Orlando Perez. Tony Sanneh has arrived from Columbus, defender Samuel Caballero and midfielder Ivan Guerrero from Honduras, plus Brazilian Thiago Gaucho, to play as an attacking midfielder. Inspirational goalkeeper Zach Thornton is back after a year of bench-warming with Benfica. An interesting addition is John Thorrington, an American forward who came through Manchester United's youth scheme.

COLUMBUS CREW

In 2004 a fine 18-game unbeaten streak seemed to be propelling Crew towards the MLS Cup (the championship decider) when scandalously bad refereeing – failure to eject New England's keeper for a blatant foul – helped dump them out of the play-offs (the fortunate keeper later saved two penalties). Coach Greg Andrulis has traded Tony Sanneh and Jeff Cunningham, while midfielder Brian Maisonneuve has retired. Coming in is forward Ante Razov, with the hope that he can form a scoring duo with the promising Edson Buddle.

DC UNITED

The champions' main problem is that they now have to share RFK stadium with the new Washington Nationals baseball team. That means pitch problems because of baseball's sand infield. An experienced defender is required to replace Ryan Nelsen (sold to Blackburn), while veteran Earnie Stewart has gone back to Holland. The hope is that Stewart's midfield role can be filled by Santino Quaranta. Jaime Moreno, arguably MLS's best player last season, is still around, as is Argentinian Christian Gomez, who proved a valuable addition last year. And maybe 2005 will be Freddy Adu's breakthrough year.

KANSAS CITY WIZARDS

Life goes on for the Wizards, last year's losing finalists, but all is not normal. The club has been put up for sale by owner Lamar Hunt, which means an uncertain future. Coach Bob Gansler made only one early move, acquiring Galaxy midfielder Sasha Victorine. Midfielder Francisco Gomez was lost to Chivas USA in the expansion draft. Keeper Tony Meola – one of the League's first signings back in 1996 – is out of contract and recovering from an injury and looks headed for retirement.

METROSTARS

We are still waiting for the hapless, hopeless MetroStars to have a really successful season. Coach Bob Bradley, called in to put things right, revamped the team in 2003, did the same again in 2004, and is now being granted the luxury of a third try. Eddie Pope, Cornell Glenn, Fabian Taylor and Joselito Vaca have all gone. Ultra-veterans Youri Djorkaeff and Jeff Agoos (both 37) have arrived. The moody but often brilliant Amado Guevara will run midfield, but the youth of his potential partners – Eddie Gaven (18), Mike Magee (20) and possibly Bradley's son Michael (17) – means they are likely to lack consistency. Up front, super-sub John Wolyniec remains, as does Argentinian Sergio Galvan Rey – the team's highest-paid player despite being a flop last year.

NEW ENGLAND REVOLUTION

An indifferent 2004 season came to life in the play-offs, ending only in a thrilling 3-3 draw and shoot-out loss to DC United in the semi-finals. Not much need for change here, though defender Rusty Pierce and Brian Kamler were lost to Salt Lake in the draft for the expansion teams. Last season coach Steve Nicol had problems making up his mind whether to play his most skilful player, midfielder Jose Cancela, from the start or from the bench, but the Uruguayan is still there, and will be joined by another South American, Brazilian Cassio. Matt Reis is undisputed No 1 keeper now that Adin Brown has departed for Norway.

Chance to shine... 2005 could be Freddy Adu's breakthrough year

WESTERN CONFERENCE – TEAM BY TEAM

CHIVAS USA

The big name is Mexican veteran Ramon Ramirez, who will be surrounded by lesser names from the parent club in Guadalajara, plus a few players with MLS experience. Chivas' first year of MLS life will not be easy, but the League will be satisfied if the club's undoubtedly passionate fan base can raise interest and excitement levels. There is hope of acquiring Costa Rican Douglas Sequeira on loan – he currently plays for Saprissa, another club owned by Chivas biggie Jorge Vergara.

COLORADO RAPIDS

New coach Fernando Clavijo has brought in the speedy Jeff Cunningham from Columbus, while getting rid of the highly-paid but non-producing import Darryl Powell. The Clavijo broom has also swept away Chris Carrieri, Seth Trembly and the League's only two Cubans, Alberto Delgado and Rey Angel Martinez. Pablo Mastroeni remains the key player, but awaits reinforcements on all fronts.

FC DALLAS

Coach Colin Clarke has lost defender Cory Gibbs (to Feyenoord) and traded veteran goalscorer Jason Kreis to Salt Lake. Midfielder Richard Mulrooney is a good addition, as is Arturo Alvarez, even though Hispanic players have not fared well under Clarke. Also, Eddie Johnson is becoming a top striker. Dallas have been the League's worst team for two seasons running and one wonders how much improvement can be expected from a team that voted rough-house midfielder Simo Valakari their outstanding player of 2004. On the bright side is the scheduled opening – sometime in mid-season – of a spanking new, soccer-specific stadium in suburban Frisco.

Galaxy star... Carlos Ruiz is the key to Los Angeles' success

LOS ANGELES GALAXY

Joining the team mid-season last year gave coach Steve Sampson little time to remould it. Now he can make his changes, offloading Sasha Victorine and Alejandro Moreno, signing Guillermo Ramirez and Michael Umana. Losing Brazilian Saragosa is a big disappointment, and veteran Cobi Jones may be headed for retirement. The key to Galaxy success remains forward Carlos Ruiz. Finding partners who understand him and his play – something that did not happen last year – is Sampson's No 1 task.

REAL SALT LAKE

Rookie coach John Ellinger has done a good job of assembling a new team with veteran players released by other MLS clubs. Eddie Pope will command the defence, Andy Williams and Clint Mathis the midfield, while Jason Kreis will score the goals. That's the theory anyway; what may upset things are locker-room squalls. Ellinger has taken on a number of players known for their feisty temperaments – Mathis, Williams, Kreis and Rusty Pierce being the obvious ones.

SAN JOSE EARTHQUAKES

Earthquakes started last season as champions and ended up nowhere. Now, coach Dominic Kinnear has lost or traded away over half of the 2004 team. The departees include the League's top player, Landon Donovan, defenders Ramiro Corrales and Jeff Agoos, and midfielders Richard Mulrooney and Ronnie Ekelund. The new midfield arrivals – Ricardo Clark, Brad Davis and Danny O'Rourke – have youth but little experience. At least a familiar face remains up front, Brian Ching, who had an excellent 12-goal 2004.

REVEALED: our fifth winner

Neil Jensen is the fifth monthly winner in our exclusive Champions League competition. His entry, published here, will now go on to the final shortlist, from which we will select the overall winner, who will win a trip to the Champions League Final in Istanbul in May.

WINNER NO 5
Neil Jensen

Ties on a knife edge, attacking football and dramatic twists – that's what you get with knockout football.

The decision to introduce a "round of 16" to the Champions League has to be applauded. The cut and thrust of two-legged eliminators has to triumph over bloated mini-league structures which promote sterility.

By all means, reward Champions League qualifiers with a minimum of six games in the early stages, but once the filtering process has been completed, test the continent's best with the sort of competition that keeps fans on the edge of their seats. Look at the quality of the last 16 – there's eight intriguing ties, most of which were still alive after the first 90 minutes.

It is tempting to say that it is a throwback to the days when European football really captured the imagination of the public – when "crack" Eastern Europeans, uncompromising Latins and total footballers from the Low Countries gave the British public a glimpse of an exotic alternative to domestic fare.

Of course, life can never return to the days when British fans viewed teams from continental Europe as if they were refugees from *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*, but the thrill of knockout football provides a real alternative to the near-banality of the Premiership.

With most national cup competitions now consigned to second-tier priority, and World Cups overblown affairs, football has been in need of sudden-death – and we are not talking golden or silver goals. It removes some of the predictability and surely that very element is what has attracted millions to the game for over 100 years.

- We're offering readers the chance to write for the magazine in an exciting new Champions League competition. One lucky – and talented – reader will also win a trip to the Champions League Final in Istanbul in May.

- All you have to do is write a short article on the Champions League. It could be a match report, a player profile or an interview with a club tealady. The more original, the better.

- Every month, we will publish the best entry in the magazine. Each monthly winner will then join a shortlist from which the overall winner will be selected.

- The winner of the grand prize will travel to the Champions League Final in Istanbul in May as a guest of *World Soccer*, watch the game as part of the *World Soccer* reporting team, and then write a report that will be published in *World Soccer*.

- So get writing! Entries must be no longer than 250 words, and must be on a subject linked to the Champions League.

- The competition will close after the Champions League quarter-finals. The winner of the grand prize will be selected from the shortlist by a panel of *World Soccer* staff.

- Send your entries to:

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or via our website:
www.worldsoccer.com

Upsetting the odds...Brazil's Kaka tussles with Edwin Tenorio during Ecuador's surprise 1-0 win in Quito

Competitive edge

Tim Vickery hails the marathon South American qualifying tournament

ARGENTINA AND BRAZIL look safe enough as South America's World Cup qualification campaign enters its third and decisive year. But the battle for the other two automatic qualifying berths looks like it will go down to the wire.

Paraguay and Ecuador currently occupy third and fourth place respectively with seven rounds to go, with fifth-placed Uruguay in line for the play-off against the Oceania section winners. But all three have cause for concern. Paraguay's ageing side had a terrible 2004, Ecuador have yet to win an away point, and Uruguay have both the toughest run-in and an awful goal difference.

They will surely come under pressure from Colombia, who came back to life last year, and Chile, who have four relatively straightforward home fixtures ahead of them. Peru will be a threat if their dangerous strikers can fire, Venezuela hope that a second wind will carry them to their first World Cup – and even bottom team Bolivia, now on to their third coach of the campaign, will be right back in contention if they win their two home games at the end of March.

After 11 rounds, nobody is out of the race, and indeed these are South America's most competitive World Cup qualifiers ever. The reason has much to do with the marathon 18-game qualifying format, first introduced in 1996 for France 98, with all the teams playing each other home and away. The key point to remember is that South America has only 10 countries. It is the only continent that needs no qualifiers for its continental championship. International sides elsewhere are in constant action, either fighting for a place in the World Cup or, for example, the European Championship. But in South America there were huge gaps between competitive matches – until 1996.

The new system, with a competitive game every month, brought the chance to develop, to stick with and groom a group of players, to grow in team spirit, confidence and tactical knowledge – conditions a European national team take for granted.

Before the current format was introduced, Ecuador and Venezuela were South America's joke teams, the only countries from the continent who had never made it to the World Cup. In their entire history Ecuador had won only five qualifiers, Venezuela just two. Look at the change. Since 1996 Venezuela have won nine qualifiers, Ecuador 20 and the latter made their World Cup debut in 2002. Talent has flowered because the organisational structure has given it a fair chance to blossom.

In the current campaign's last round, in November, Ecuador beat a full-strength Brazil 1-0 at home, while Venezuela gave an attractive Argentina side a scare in Buenos Aires before going down 3-2. These are sure signs that international football in South America has never been better.

However, the format is now under threat – from within and without.

Brazil want a shorter qualification campaign. They seem uninterested in developing the sport in their continent or giving their own public the chance to see the country's Europe-based stars in competitive action. But they are clearly very interested in having free dates to play lucrative friendlies in Europe and Asia – witness the absurd recent trip to Hong Kong.

Meanwhile, FIFA president Sepp Blatter has said the world body will no longer accept such a long campaign. But his claim that there are not enough dates in the international calendar is not true. There is nothing to stop South America playing World Cup matches while Europe, say, is staging the qualifiers for its continental championship – as was happening in 2003.

Between 2002 and 2006 England, for example, will have played 18 or 20 European Championship and World Cup qualifying matches. Holland might even get up to 24. So why on earth shouldn't the South Americans be allowed to play 18?

'Even bottom-of-the-table Bolivia can get right back in contention'

Fighting fit

Iran forward Ali Karimi, recently named Asian Player of the Year, tells Michael Church how he rates his country's World Cup chances

Congratulations on your award. How would you sum up 2004?
It was definitely a good year, particularly for me. We played some good games at the Asian Cup in China [Iran finished third] and now there's a lot of responsibility on our shoulders because everyone's biggest dream is to qualify for the World Cup.

Iran have made it through to the final round of qualifiers but you had a bad start to the first phase of qualifying. Can you explain why?
It could have been because we weren't fit enough physically and we needed to improve our teamwork. Now the team are 100 per cent fit and ready for the second round of qualifying.

Why do Iran tend to struggle against lesser nations?
When we play the smaller teams our players unfortunately are too proud of themselves and will not show their ability. We have to respect our opponents, and our coach [Branko Ivankovic] has tried to encourage us to play at the same level against everyone. My team-mates and I understand now that if we are going to qualify for any important tournaments we have to take it seriously and listen to the coach.

Before the draw for the final qualifying groups, Iran were the one team everyone else wanted to avoid. What do you think about that attitude?
Well, it's one thing to respect an opponent but something else if you are afraid of them. That's not a very good attitude. Any country that deserves to go to the World Cup will be ready to face anyone and not be afraid of any other team in Asia.

You drew with Japan at the Asian Cup before Zico's team went on to win the tournament. Now you face them in the World Cup qualifiers. What do you think of their side?
We have great respect for Japan. In the last few years they have done a wonderful job and had a lot of good performances. They are one of the strongest teams in Asia and we will have to play to the best of our ability to beat them. But I hope our national team and Japan can both qualify for Germany because we both deserve it [the top two in the four-team group qualify automatically].

What do you see as Japan's strong points?
The most impressive part of the team is their discipline. They are also good in midfield and up front but their defence is not so strong.

Iran has produced some of Asia's most talented individuals, but have the national team failed to really fulfil their potential?
Well, we can get better, there's no doubt. With better management by the federation and the coach we can be a great team. Individually, we have great players but our teamwork still needs much improvement.

Is Branko Ivankovic the right man to take Iran onwards?
Definitely. Branko has been in Iran for four or five years now and during the time he has been head coach he has done a great job. We have won some big games and he is one of our most successful coaches. I have a lot of respect for him.

By handing you the Player of the Year award, the Asian Football Confederation has clearly recognised your talent. How have you developed into the player you are now?
First of all, you can't engineer talent, it's something God gives to a player. I haven't done anything consciously. Like every other footballer in Iran, I started playing when I was young in the alleyways in my neighbourhood. I played futsal and I did well at that. I practised every day and I watched Iranian players in the League and the big players in Europe, and I think that's important.

Room for improvement...Karimi believes Iran can only get better

Who were your favourite players when you were growing up?
There was one called Majed Namjou Mottagh who had a great influence on me. Technically, he was fantastic. I was also a big fan of Luis Figo.

You currently play your club football with Al Ahli in the United Arab Emirates but you are always being linked with a move to Europe. Are you still keen to try your luck there?
Next summer I need to make a big decision regarding my career. If I did go to Europe I'd like to play at a club where I will play all the time, not just sit on the bench. I'd like to go to a country that doesn't have any Iranian players already there so I can show what we can do.

So you won't be following all the other Iranians who have gone to Germany?
We will have to wait and see. I would go to Germany if it was to one of the top clubs, although I would have to look at the conditions.

Keir Radnedge sees the new Wembley stadium take shape

Marvel arch

I am sitting high up in the new Wembley stadium. The spring sunshine is streaming down on to the matchless bright green turf. I am sitting in a wide, comfortable red seat up above the halfway line. Chelsea and Manchester United are about to kick off the 2006 FA Cup Final. The world-famous home of English football is open for business again after five years of controversy. A magnificent arch soars high over the stadium and the sun casts its glorious shadow across towards the centre of London. At last, in the words of the most popular of English sports songs, "football's coming home".

OF COURSE, not all the above may come to pass. I have no idea which teams will meet in next year's FA Cup Final, I cannot guarantee the weather and I do not possess the secret of time travel.

But I have sat (garbed in the appropriate colours of white and yellow of safety hat, jacket and boots) in the first seats to be installed in the new Wembley stadium and I have gazed up at the magnificent arch and then down to where the pitch will be.

Right now the pitch level has to be imagined. The real floor of the stadium lies many metres below and is a construction site with trucks, cranes and all the paraphernalia necessary to put together what one expert has described as "the first example of the fourth generation of stadia".

The first generation was represented by the Colosseum in Rome, the second by the original Wembley stadium in 1923, the third by the Sydney Olympic stadium.

An inspection delegation from the International Olympic Committee visited Wembley during its recent trip to assess London's bid to host the 2012 Games and was, according to all reports, suitably impressed. The old/new stadium, with its sliding roof, will open in the spring of next year with the formal gala being the 2006 FA Cup Final. But this will not be the 'real' first match. Wembley chief executive Michael Cunnah says: "We will need to test out the way the stadium operates ahead of the Cup Final so we will probably have a couple of 'soft' games – maybe an Under-21 match or a youth international."

Cunnah has proved a miracle worker. When he 'graduated' from FA finance director to his current post in 2000 the Wembley project was seen as the poisoned chalice of British sport. It had damaged Ken Bates, former FA chief executive Adam Crozier and various sports ministers.

Disputes had long raged over not merely the financing but the very concept and the ultimate impossibility of accommodating track and field within the stadium. At one stage the FA faced having to hand back the Lottery cash that had helped fund the purchase of the site.

Huge amounts of money were also expended on a confusion of plans both for the stadium and the surrounding urban area and its

FACT AND FICTION: The new Wembley's pitch is not being turned at 90 degrees to the old, as is the popular belief – just a mere 15 degrees at most

WEMBLEY WONDERS

- The front rows of seats will be closer to the pitch than in the old stadium
- Every seat will have more legroom than the old Royal Box
- A staircase to the presentation rostrum has been recreated – thus no pitch presentations of cups and medals
- Wembley will boast four of the largest 'sit-down' restaurants in London and a banqueting hall with a 1,900 capacity
- More toilets will be available than at any other stadium in the world

Up for the Cup...an aerial representation of Wembley filled to its 90,000 capacity

Glitter band...the stadium will be an impressive sight at night events

decrepit transport links. "Everyone has a transport story about the old Wembley," says Cunnah. "People who had a great time at the match then spent hours queueing to get away from the place. It was a nightmare and something which had to be addressed.

"You can have the most wonderful stadium in the world – and we will – but if fans struggle to reach it and leave it the whole experience is undermined. We can't afford to get that wrong."

Convenient links

British critics of the Wembley project compared access to the new stadium unfavourably with the Stade de France at Saint-Denis, north of Paris. But if you visit both now you can see plainly that rail links – both underground and overground – are equally convenient.

Drive anti-clockwise around the north-west of London on the main ring road and the shell of the new Wembley rises majestically on the western approach. By comparison, the old stadium could not be seen from the road because the famous old twin towers were only a quarter the height of the new arch.

Enormous controversy was generated by the fact that the towers, emblematic of the old Wembley, had to be demolished to make way for the new arena. Incorporating them in the design for the vast new ground proved impossible. Now, visitors can see why. It's all a matter of size. As Cunnah says: "If we had kept the towers they would probably be in row four of the North Stand."

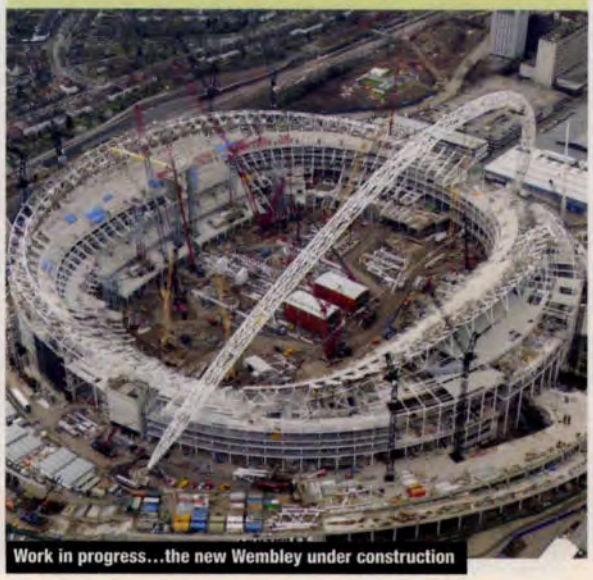
The new Wembley will soar more than twice as high as the old, will be a major landmark for anyone flying into Heathrow airport, west of London, and promises to become as much a worldwide sporting icon as was the old stadium.

The new Wembley will be a working stadium, as was the old one. Many national stadia around the world are prestige monuments owned and run by state or municipal authorities. But Wembley has always been owned by private companies and must thus pay its way. The staging of the FA Cup Final and a handful of England matches every year has never been sufficient to balance the books.

That is why Wembley has hosted dozens of other events over the

THE OLD AND THE NEW

	OLD STADIUM	NEW STADIUM
Stadium height	23m	57m
Capacity	79,000	90,000
Premier seats	1,000	17,000
Box suites	57	162
Wheelchair spaces	160	310
Obstructed view	6,000	none
Toilets	361	2,618
Food points	152	688



Work in progress...the new Wembley under construction

decades. Other sports have hired the stadium – rugby union, rugby league, hockey, American football and speedway, to name just a few.

But by the mid-1990s it was clear that Wembley was way past its best. Security demands and seating installations had led to capacity being cut steadily from 126,000 to 100,000 to 92,000 to 86,000. Facilities for fans were inadequate and the view, for the majority, was poor. Officials and fans who had the chance to visit great new foreign stadia, from Mexico to Milan, grew increasingly vocal in their complaints.

Eventually, Wembley and the Football Association bowed to the inevitable. The old Wembley closed its gates for ever after England's 1-0 defeat by Germany in a World Cup qualifier in October 2000.

Financial and administrative chaos followed. Rows over money, design and redevelopment escalated to the highest levels of government. Many doubted whether the rebuilding project would ever get off the ground. The FA, in effect, bought out the Wembley owners and was then pushed to the brink of financial ruin by the sheer scale of the task.

Progress has not exactly been helped by a financial dispute between the lead contractor, Multiplex, and sub-contractor Cleveland Bridge.

One cherished FA project, the scheduled £30million construction of a National Football Centre at Burton on Trent in the east Midlands, will probably fall victim to the Wembley project's voracious financial appetite. Some £15m has already been committed to what threatens to become known as Crozier's folly, after the FA chief executive at the time the project was launched.

£757m final bill

The FA needs every penny for Wembley. Cunnah, who had been financial director at the FA and was thus the only man who knew what was needed when push came to shove, computed the final bill at £757m. Millions more will be invested in redeveloping the surrounding area.

Many sports officials and politicians from England's regions have been bitterly critical. Fans from Manchester and Liverpool, Newcastle and Birmingham believed that a national football stadium should be accessible to the nation and that London, in the south-east corner, was not the best place for it.

They have a point. But no stadium in the world has an aura to match that famous name. My view is that the new Wembley will be an entirely worthy successor to the old.

A "Venue of Legends" indeed.

WHERE THE MONEY CAME FROM...

Bank loans	£433m
The FA	£148m
Pre-closure profits from the old stadium	£15m
Sport England	£120m
London Development Agency	£21m
Dept of Culture, Media and Sport	£20m

...AND WHERE IT IS GOING

Land purchase and associated costs	£106m
Basic building	£352m
Demolishing the old stadium and fitting the new	£93m
Infrastructure contribution	£21m
Management, financing etc	£165m
Miscellaneous, contingency	£20m

Capital view...the Wembley arch will become a London landmark in its own right

WS WORLD SOCCER GLOBAL VIEW Paul Gardner

IFAB does not rule OK

The International Board must enter the 21st century – or at least the 20th

IN WHAT IS beginning to look like an annual procedure, the International Board (IFAB) has issued a further clarification of the offside rule. I am studying it and will report back later. No doubt it's a bit complicated, though I doubt whether it's as complicated as British coaches and the British press insist it is. For the moment, I'll stick with the simpler decisions coming from IFAB's recent meeting.

Opponents must be at least two yards away at a throw-in: excellent, and only about 50 years late in arriving.

Any part of a player's foot or his head – including the tip of his nose, presumably – can render him offside: utterly absurd, providing just what the sport does not need, a justification for all those wrongly-raised flags from the referee's assistants. Offside by a nose, indeed!

'A player is required to wear stockings. Hey guys, what happened to knickerbockers?'

Also, it seems that the phantom ban on tackles from behind has been widened: "From now on, match officials must also show the red card to players who make dangerous tackles from the front or the side," says FIFA's press release.

This is puzzling because the "Additional Instructions" section of the rules already contains the following wording (I have added the italics): "Any player who lunges at an opponent in challenging for the ball *from the front, from the side,* or from behind using one or both legs, with excessive force and endangering the safety of an opponent is guilty of serious foul play." And serious foul play, says Rule 12, is a red-card offence.

Nothing new there, then, and no doubt we can all sleep comfortably knowing that referees will go on finding every which way to avoid doling out the ejections that the rules say they must.

Then there is the business of the ball with the embedded chip, which has its comical side as IFAB – a Victorian committee if ever there was one – is finally forced to acknowledge the arrival of, at least, the 20th century.

You think I joke? Just look at the wording of Rule 4, dealing with a player's basic equipment. He's required to wear stockings. Not socks, but stockings, if you please. Hey guys, what happened to the knickerbockers?

It makes you wonder how up to date the good IFAB professors are or if they ever sit down to read their own rules. Do they understand, for instance, that a scissors kick is quite different from a bicycle kick? A further look at the Additional Instructions section suggests that they do not. Under the heading "Scissors or bicycle kick", only the scissors kick is referred to, as though the two terms are synonymous.

Have the IFAB-ists looked lately at Rule 8, which outlines the procedure for the kick-off: "The ball is in play when it is kicked and moves forward."

Why does it have to move forward? What possible difference can it make if it moves sideways or backwards? As it's in play the moment a foot touches it, how is the referee supposed to tell whether it has moved forward, anyway? Another relic rule that needs removing.

Does IFAB realise that crucial games these days often go into overtime, putting a heavy burden on players, particularly in hot weather? If the members know that, why do they not modify Rule 3, to allow extra substitutes whenever a game goes into overtime?

Then there is the tangled matter of the goal area. This involves not only a definition problem, but offers another example of IFAB's refusal to get with it.

Suppose you want to know what the goal area is all about – where do you look to find out? The rulebook lists the headings for all 17 rules, but there is no mention of goal area. You would probably start by looking at Rule 1, the Field of Play. Fine, there you have a description of the field markings and dimensions that comprise the goal area.

Pedal power...Thierry Henry demonstrates a bicycle kick

But what is the function of the goal area? Where do you look to find that information? Sorry – you're going to have to read through the entire set of rules to find out. How so? Because no one has yet compiled an index to the rules. A straightforward procedure, made much easier by computers, but IFAB apparently can't be bothered to do it, or to commission others to do it.

So, if you want to know exactly what the rule is on obstruction, for instance, you've got to go searching for the word. Well, you won't find it, it doesn't exist any more; we now speak of "impeding the progress of an opponent". A simple index entry "Obstruction: see Impeding the progress" would brush up your terminology and direct you smartly to the appropriate section of Rule 12.

Sadly, an index would not be nearly so helpful in solving the goal area problem. It would direct you to Rule 1, of course, then to Rule 8, where you'd learn how to take free-kicks or dropped balls given within the goal area, and then on to Rule 13, which merely repeats the free-kick information in Rule 8, and you end up in Rule 16, which tells you that a goal-kick can be taken from anywhere within the goal area.

And that's it. Nowhere is there any explanation of what the goal area is actually for. The old Rule 12 reference making it OK to charge a goalkeeper when he "has passed outside his goal area" disappeared in 1995.

The goal area now has no function at all. I wonder if IFAB knows that?

Finger of suspicion...but the charges brought against Robert Hoyzer have caused few ripples across the rest of Europe

Warning signs

We ignore the Hoyzer case at our peril

THE DISGRACED ROBERT HOYZER is out on bail, the discredited Gerhard Mayer-Vorfelder has clung on as joint president of the German federation, Hamburg's silence over their fixed Cup defeat by Paderborn has been bought...and German football breathes a huge sigh of relief.

The reasoning is both complex and worrying.

As Bundesliga boredom sets in over Hoyzer, his implicated colleagues and the infamous 63 matches that earned him a few thousand euros (and a plasma-screen television) on the side, so one remarkable fact is sinking in: how little notice has been taken abroad.

Is the rest of the game cynically inured to the occasional bent referee? Does it see nothing unusual in Germany having its own bad apples? Perhaps this means merely that resistance to football's black arts is weakening.

Other straws are blowing in the wind. The International Board, for instance, has decided that all tackles that endanger the safety of an opponent – tackles from the front and side as well as from behind – are to be deemed serious foul play. Referees must now use their subjective judgement about the danger of any tackle. This means many will judge the "danger" as relating to the reaction of hostile fans.

'Is the rest of the game cynically inured to the occasional bent referee?'

Just as the thugs on the pitch have gained a little leeway so concern grows apace over whether the game is strong enough to cope with its many law-breakers.

The Juventus doping case has gathered more international headlines than Hoyzer. Those world, European and domestic trophies gathered in the late 1990s should be stripped from the Old Lady of Turin, says World Anti-Doping Agency chief Dick Pound.

FIFA president Sepp Blatter believes taking such measures after so long would be misplaced. But should football permit a statute of limitations?

If the German federation (DFB) discovers that Hoyzer had persuaded a colleague to fix a high-profile Bundesliga game – rather than a Second Division clash – how many years back can or should it go in punishing him?

Look at the case of the Spanish federation, which rapped a couple of clubs £400 for racist chanting and fined national coach Luis Aragones £2,000 for his racist abuse (at second hand) of Thierry Henry. Who will act against Spain now?

Glenn Hoddle may think he lost the England manager's job for less.

Remember how FIFA warned of the close eye it was keeping on the Rio Ferdinand dope-test case? How, if the punishment did not fit the crime, it would administer its own rough justice? So where is this justice now that Luis is off the hook?

I suppose it was a step forward that Henry was not fined for attacking the leniency of the punishment – as Arsenal team-mate Patrick Vieira was disgracefully punished for complaining when Valencia's racist choir was given a mere limp-wristed slap by UEFA.

Back in Germany, the only fixed game to be replayed is down in the amateur leagues, while Hamburg's acquiescence has been bought for compensation of £1.4million and the receipts from an international friendly (probably against that huge draw China) at the start of next season.

Who knows, maybe Hoyzer will turn up one day as a high-flying international refereeing adviser.

After all, he is on his way to an Oscar. One of his matches – in the category "mistakes to avoid" from the Hamburg-Paderborn Cup tie – has already featured in a DFB training video.

Time for sponsors to pay up

HAVING submitted my own comments about the BBC to Tessa Jowell, my reward was a copy of the Media Secretary's proposals for the renewal of the corporation's charter.

The licence fee stays, of course, but if anyone wants an alternative then I may have the answer.

I have complained here before about stadium naming rights. This has taken root in England, at Bolton, Stoke and soon the new Arsenal home, among others. In Germany an internet service provider has usurped the Volkspark label in Hamburg and a bank is about to claim as its own Frankfurt's redeveloped Waldstadion for the next 10 years.

But I see no reason why BBC – and even ITV and Sky, come to that – should donate free advertising to these companies. Let them pay the broadcasters if they want their corporate titles to get a mention on air.

In fact, let's go even further.

More than a decade ago I interviewed Silvio Berlusconi for *World Soccer* and was struck by the prophecy from this Italian prime-minister-in-waiting about matchday attendances.

Berlusconi foresaw fans being admitted free because the atmosphere they created was crucial to the show attracting the media (and, on the media's back, sponsors).

But even the best of friends can fall out. One day – maybe before the BBC's next charter review – a new generation of TV executives may wake up to financial reality. Then it will be payback time – literally – for the corporations who wrap up their advertising in the disguise of sport.

If they want their logos to appear on air then they will have to pay – not only FIFA and UEFA, but also the broadcasters.

In the meantime, a few quid in the pot from stadium sponsors would be a start.

Visionary...Berlusconi

Remembering Cisowski

FRENCH FOOTBALL owes a huge debt to the children and grandchildren of its African colonial immigrants, from the Zidanes to the Thurams. But it was not always so. In the 1950s and 1960s it owed a significant debt to the sons of Polish immigrants who had fled the ominous shadows being cast by Stalin and Hitler.

The most famous was Raymond Kopaszewski, better known as Kopa, the first Frenchman to be hailed European Footballer of the Year.

One of his heroes was an expatriate Pole, Tadeusz Cisowski, who has died at 78. Cisowski – known as Thadee in France – was born in Lazky in 1927, emigrated to France with his family when he was six, and scored 11 goals in 13 games for his new country in the late Forties and early Fifties.

Cisowski was only the second Frenchman to score five goals in an international, a 6-3 win over Belgium in November 1956. He was three times League top scorer during a 15-year career with Metz, Racing Club, Valenciennes and Nantes.

Injury prevented him leading France's attack at the 1958 World Cup. His bad luck was good fortune for Just Fontaine.

Blatter's problem with technology

SOMEONE HAS STUCK a German foot in Sepp Blatter's door and the FIFA president is none too happy about it – and this has nothing whatever to do with Robert Hoyzer or eastern European mafiosi.

Blatter's face was a picture of studied diplomacy at the press conference that followed the annual meeting of the International Board in Cardiff.

His role was to review all the decisions (and non-decisions). Most contentiously these included approving a trial, at September's Under-17 World Championship in Peru, of the Germany-developed Smartball system of settling whether a ball has crossed a goal-line.

"If all goes well," said Brian Barwick, the English FA's new chief executive, "this can be used at the World Cup finals in Germany next year. The timing is right – 40 years on from Geoff Hurst legitimately scoring his second and England's third goal in the World Cup Final we will have a system which would have been able to prove it conclusively."

Blatter was plainly not happy. He has always proclaimed "the universality of football," which means a level playing field on Copacabana and in Maracana. He knows that letting in goal-line technology is merely the beginning of the real battle over technological assistance in general.

The debate is a fascinating one in the law-making context because doorstepping the International Board is like peering in on Adam and Eve, like making a journey back through time. This is also the one remaining world football authority in which England (yes, along with Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland) has a significant voice in the way the game is run. The real game, that is, the one played in high-tech stadia but also on parks and beaches, streets and wastelands around the world.

Contention...would Smartball have confirmed Geoff Hurst's controversial 1966 World Cup Final goal?

The International Board is not about the few thousand professionals and the smoke and mirrors of the image-builders but about the way the game is played by millions – the ones Blatter wants to save from modern technology.

The International Board also decided:

- To clarify that the six substitutes restriction (the so-called Eriksson's Law) applies only to international 'A' team friendlies.
- To confirm that being "in active play" in terms of offside rulings applies to a player receiving the ball or obstructing a goalkeeper's line of vision.
- To remove the specificity of "a tackle from behind" as serious foul play.
- That a referee is in charge from the moment he enters the field of play until he leaves it.
- That infringement by an attacking player at a missed penalty is to be punished by an indirect free-kick.
- That no opponent can stand nearer than two metres from a player taking a throw-in.

All changes come into effect from July 1. The English experiment of moving the ball forward nine metres to punish time-wasting at a free-kick will be discontinued for lack of international support.

Not for sale...Manchester United fans demonstrate against the proposed takeover by American tycoon Malcolm Glazer

Stock clearance

Clubs are delisting after flotations have failed to deliver

THE SHORT HISTORY of football clubs being quoted on stock exchanges is one of impossible dreams of wealth turning into financial nightmares.

Since Tottenham joined the London Stock Exchange in 1989 over 40 clubs across Europe have sought to put themselves on a sound financial base by listing their shares, but few flotations have delivered meaningful dividends for investors.

Indeed, as illustrated by the case of Borussia Dortmund (see page 44), listing on the stock exchange has proved to be the precursor to financial meltdown.

The dash for stock exchange cash that was started by Spurs took a while to catch on, with only Millwall and Manchester United taking the plunge initially, in 1989 and 1991 respectively. However, a further 10 English clubs joined the markets between 1996 and 1999, and the phenomenon soon spread to Europe with the likes of Lazio and Roma in Italy, Ajax in Holland and Dortmund in Germany all offering investors the chance to cash in on football's financial boom.

That listed clubs have failed to deliver returns to investors is illustrated by the fact that in Britain, the supposed home of football's new commercialism, the number of quoted clubs has fallen from 27 to 16.

Where have the former stock market darlings gone? Well, thankfully they are all still playing football, though some, such as Leeds, are a shadow of their former selves. Chelsea have been rescued from bankruptcy by Roman Abramovich, who sensibly took the club private. Others such as Bolton have avoided financial meltdown but have decided that the benefits of a listing are outweighed by the costs and bought out investors, who decided to take limited losses rather than persevere in the increasingly futile hope of a payday. Sunderland are open in their aim to buy out shareholders and return to private ownership.

'In Britain the number of quoted clubs has fallen from 27 to 16'

Manchester United have managed to use the market to raise cash for investment in Old Trafford and have regularly paid dividends to their shareholders. But that has brought its own problems – the unwanted attentions of Malcolm Glazer – illustrating the dictum that once a club joins the stock market it is permanently for sale.

It seems as if the flight will continue. It seems highly unlikely that Dortmund will be able to maintain a listing, even if they avoid bankruptcy. Lazio and Roma soldier on hugely in debt, with their share prices so low – 10 and five per cent of their 2000 prices respectively – that investors have given up hope of getting their money back.

At the same time, the financial markets' antipathy for football means big clubs with legitimate needs to raise cash for new stadiums, such as Arsenal and Liverpool, have had to find other means.

The era of football clubs listing on the stock exchanges appears well and truly over. Few fans will be sorry.

Simon Banks

FOOTBALL MEMORIES

Foreign service

Brian Glanville on the prolific Juventus and Italy career of Argentina-born Omar Sivori

Consummate finisher...Sivori cracks in a goal for Argentina

OMAR SIVORI, socks for ever rolled down to his ankles, possessed of immaculate control, an electric turn and a superb left foot, was one of the finest Argentinian attackers of all time, yet never played for his country at the World Cup. This was because soon after the inside-left had emphatically made his name in Argentina's 1957 Copa America triumph in Peru, he and the other two members of the so-called Trio of Death – inside-right Humberto Maschio and centre-forward Valentin Angelillo – were off to make their fortunes in Italy.

That they should immediately be discarded by Argentina was truly a case of self-destruction, especially as the World Cup finals in Sweden were just a year away. But by leaving the country the three were bizarrely regarded as renegades. In Sweden, without them, Argentina were humiliated 6-1 by Czechoslovakia.

'By leaving Argentina Sivori was bizarrely regarded as a renegade'

Sivori, 21, left River Plate for Juventus, Angelillo joined Internazionale and Maschio went, initially, to Atalanta. Sivori cost a hefty £91,000, substantially more than Juve paid for centre-forward John Charles at the same time – a then English record of £65,000.

Sivori settled instantly in Italian football, where he became famous for his 'tunnel', or as we know it, 'nutmeg' – putting the ball between an opponent's legs. The Juventus trio was completed at inside-right by the juvenile lead of Italian football, Giampiero Boniperti.

The three took Juve to the *scudetto* – their first for six years – in their first season together. They finished eight points ahead of runners-up Fiorentina, with Sivori playing in all but two of the 34 games, scoring 22 goals and proving a perfect foil for Charles, who led the attack.

Two more championships followed, in 1960 and 1961. In each, Sivori was prolific – hitting 27 goals in 31 games in the first and 25 in 27 appearances in the next.

In April 1961, Sivori was capped by Italy, who had been exploiting the dual nationality of overseas-born players for decades. He scored the winner on his debut, a 3-2 defeat of Northern Ireland, and drove home a goal against England in Rome in May, though the visitors won 3-2. The following month, ironically, he scored twice in a 4-1 friendly victory over Argentina in Florence, and followed up by hitting four as Israel were thrashed 6-0 in a World Cup qualifier in Turin.

Sivori flew with the *Azzurri* to Chile in 1962 for his only World Cup finals. He played in the first and third group games, against West Germany and Switzerland, but luckily missed the brutally violent second against the hosts in Santiago.

In 1965 he left Juventus, for whom he had scored 134 goals, and moved to Napoli, but things fell apart. He received a signing-on bonus of £24,000, big money then, but in four seasons played only a dozen games.

There would, however, be a luminous postscript to his career. In 1973 he was appointed manager of Argentina and took them on a hugely successful tour of Europe. But Sivori was too independent and by the World Cup finals in West Germany the following year he had gone – and Argentina foundered.

Sivori returned to Italy to work in journalism and television. He died in his native city, Buenos Aires, aged 69 on February 17.

FROM THE ARCHIVES

SEPTEMBER 1985

IN AN INTERVIEW WITH IAN MACLEOD, RINUS MICHELS, WHO DIED RECENTLY AGED 77, SPOKE AT LENGTH ABOUT THE PROBLEMS FACING THE MODERN GAME

"TODAY THERE IS a major problem. Ten years ago we had the advantage of players who developed in the streets. They were playing in many different kinds of situations and had to survive and improvise in group games without a leader; and the most important thing of all, they were training without coaches.

"Now there is no playing in the streets – that is gone, so they have started to organise games and competitions at a much earlier age – eight years old. But they are not compensating for the quality – now they do in one week what before was being done in one day. The instinct is missing, the instinct that only comes with playing regularly and together in groups where they have to survive.

"You need good coaches with authority ...unfortunately, in the last five or six years we have seen another problem...many of the coaches who are now involved with the top teams were not top players. Sure, they have the necessary licence to coach, but they do not have the authority that top players like [Johan] Cruyff would have.

"The coaches take too negative an approach in a player's development and so we are developing a kind of player with less quality – the type who makes the game unhealthy. They are 'jailing' him too quickly and stifling his development as an individual. More and more we seem to develop a type of player who is inclined to play without risk and does not want to have any responsibility."

Dortmund on the brink

GERMANY

"I CAN'T MAKE head nor tail of it," declared FIFA president Sepp Blatter when asked to comment on reports that Borussia Dortmund were teetering on the brink of liquidation. "This is a club with 80,000 fans for every home game and they still can't survive. Words fail me." Well, Sepp, you're not alone.

Dortmund have been haemorrhaging cash over the past two seasons despite their huge fan base, their outstanding record in the past 15 years (three Bundesliga titles, in 1992,1993 and 2002, plus Champions League and World Club Cup triumphs in 1997) and their assertion five years ago that floating on the stock market would take them on to an even higher plane. It is estimated that their total debts will amount to £100million come June.

Bankruptcy beckons, and even if they do manage to avoid the receivers' clutches, there is a real possibility the German League (DFL) will not renew their professional licence. Such a decision would doom them to the Third Division.

The word crisis does not begin to describe the present situation at Borussia. Shares that were initially on sale for £7.60 are currently worth only £1.70; they have been forced to sell their Westfalenstadion home to the Molsiris property fund group and now lease it back for £12m a year; and president Dr Gerd Niebaum was forced to resign last November, to be replaced by local lawyer Dr Reinhard Rauball, after close to two decades in the job.

Dortmund have tried all manner of measures to steady the ship, including increasing their share capital last autumn, the mortgaging of merchandising rights relating to the club name and logo, and making substantial cuts to the wage bill of the first-team squad and coaching staff (from £40m in 2002-03 to £27m this season). But the accounts have remained a deep shade of scarlet and fans are talking revolution, marching in the streets of the Ruhr city and calling on general manager Michael Meier to step down.

So what has brought Dortmund to the edge of the abyss? Dwindling revenue from German TV contracts after the crash of the Kirch media empire has played its part, as has the club's failure to qualify for the last two editions of the Champions League. Many also believe Dortmund overstretched themselves in relation to recent extension work at the Westfalenstadion, borrowing too much money and agreeing to an over-ambitious repayment plan.

Transfer dealings over the past five years that have left them with a deficit of £46m also tells its own sad story. The acquisition of average players at inflated prices has become a house speciality.

Dortmund have few options left since politicians in their home state of North Rhine-Westphalia are refusing to bail them out. Their best hope is to persuade creditors – particularly Molsiris – to agree to a restructuring plan that involves rescheduling rental payments for the Westfalenstadion and deferring the reimbursement of other creditors until 2006. Another way out could be to sell the naming rights to the ground.

"If all the creditors approve this rescheduling project, we can return to good shape," said Meier. "We're hopeful we'll be given our licence for the 2005-06 season. But the plan has to be implemented by everybody in a very disciplined way. If not, the company will be in danger."

Ironically, Dortmund's Bundesliga form has improved considerably just as their future has increasingly come into doubt. Only one defeat in seven games since the winter break has eased relegation fears and they seem to have struck gold with the loan signing of Polish forward Ebi Smolarek from Feyenoord.

However, not even the most rabid Dortmund fan dreams of anything more than a mid-table finish. That one recent defeat was a 5-0 thrashing at Bayern Munich, showing what a gulf has opened up between sides who not long ago used to go toe-to-toe for top spot.

All went according to the form book in the German Cup quarter-finals. Bayern hardly moved out of second gear as they cruised to a 7-0 win at struggling Freiburg, holders Werder Bremen overcame Bayern's amateurs 3-0 on a pitch ankle-deep in snow in Munich while Schalke and Arminia Bielefeld beat Hannover and Hansa Rostock respectively. Schalke meet Werder, and Bielefeld host Bayern in the semis on April 19.

Nick Bidwell

Fretful faithful...despite their troubles, Dortmund still attract big crowds

PSG stumble and fall

FRANCE

EVEN A CHANGE of coach has not changed Paris Saint-Germain's fortunes. The team's French Cup exit at the hands of Auxerre has left them without a sniff of silverware for the season, they are a long way off the European placings in the League and even looking over their shoulder at a potential relegation battle.

It all looked a lot brighter when former player and reserve team coach Laurent Fournier replaced beleaguered Bosnian Vahid Halilhodzic as head coach in early February.

Although there were worries that Fournier lacked the experience to lead a club of PSG's stature – his only previous head coach post was a six-month spell at Bastia six years ago – he enjoyed immediate success. In his first game in charge, PSG, the Cup holders, beat Bordeaux 3-1 after extra-time to reach the last 16, and the victory seemed to reflect the fact the players were relishing life after the disciplinarian regime of Halilhodzic.

"A fresh wind is blowing at the training camp," said keeper Jerome Alonzo, while Jerome Rothen, who joined PSG last summer, commented: "It's strange. Last year I was playing for the [domestic] title and in the Champions League Final with Monaco. Now I am playing to avoid relegation… But the feeling is good now in the camp.

"It was time for a change. We were tired of the pressure, the lack of communication and the meticulous way of thinking. We are responsible adults and fathers, so we know how to behave and how to be good professionals. We don't need to have someone behind us every second breaking our balls."

PSG's results had been poor this season, but the players' dislike of Halilhodzic's hardline rule was as big a reason behind his departure. The warning signs had been there since last summer, when, despite having finished second in the League and winning the French Cup, high-profile players such as Gabriel Heinze (to Manchester United), Juan Pablo Sorin (Cruzeiro), Frederic Dehu and Fabrice Fiorese (both Marseille) all left expressing their bitterness towards the coach.

This season, the mood was hardly helped by the team's poor League form and early exit from Europe after finishing bottom of their Champions League group.

Halilhodzic, who took over from Luis Fernandez in summer 2003, successfully united the whole squad against him by giving a hardline interview to *L'Equipe* on the day before a home League game against Lens in early February. In it he questioned his own wisdom in having made Jose Pierre-Fanfan team captain, said he hadn't wanted to sign Russian midfielder Sergei Semak because he wanted a better player, criticised Brazilian striker Pauleta for not scoring enough goals and accused the squad of lacking determination.

PSG's 2-0 loss to Lens left them only 12th in the table, seven points off the relegation zone.

Cup of woe…Jerome Rothen (right) vies with Auxerre's Bakari Sagna in holders PSG's 3-2 defeat

Halilhodzic's reaction was to announce the morning after the game that he was taking the squad on a four-day training camp in Normandy. The players simply refused to go.

The timing of the revolt was critical, coming just a few days before PSG faced Bordeaux in the Cup, a competition that was their last realistic chance of entry into Europe next season. The importance of the game prompted Canal Plus, the pay-per-view channel that owns the club, to put pressure on chairman Francis Graille to act.

Graille's own position was under threat so, despite his personal friendship with Halilhodzic, decided to end his reign. The Bosnian, who is negotiating for a compensation pay-off of a reported £2million, reacted bitterly, telling the media: "Everything that has been said is lies. I was working on a long-term basis and I knew I would overcome this crisis. Unfortunately, I never had the players I was looking for. I am disgusted."

The brighter feeling in the camp after his departure did not last long, and PSG's Cup defeat by Auxerre was all the more galling since the team threw away a 2-0 lead to lose 3-2. Fournier managed to put a smile back on the team's faces for a while, but only a much closer tilt at some silverware will truly bring back the feelgood factor.

Erik Bielderman

Koeman quits in despair

HOLLAND

RONALD KOEMAN RESIGNED as Ajax coach after concluding he could get no more from the side following their elimination from the UEFA Cup by Auxerre. "I can't bring myself to get over this setback and make the team perform better again," said the 41-year-old former Holland defender.

Koeman's decision was no surprise since his position had become untenable. Although he led Ajax to the League title in 2002 and last season, he seemed incapable of getting the team on track this term. Ajax lost the Dutch Supercup 4-2 to Utrecht, exited the Champions League at the end of the group stage, and trailed PSV Eindhoven and AZ Alkmaar in the League. The 3-2 aggregate defeat by Auxerre put the final nail in the coffin.

There were also off-field problems. Last October technical director Louis Van Gaal stepped down after the coach had made a thinly-veiled attack on him for having unrealistic expectations of Ajax's young and inexperienced squad. Koeman also did not see eye to eye with many of his players, especially Wesley Sneijder and Rafael Van der Vaart.

Assistants Ruud Krol and Tonny Bruins Slot have taken the reins temporarily, while Tottenham manager Martin Jol, Henk ten Cate (Barcelona assistant) and Danny Blind (Ajax's youth director) are in the frame to succeed Koeman long-term.

Feyenoord are also in trouble on and off the field. They lie a place behind Ajax in the League, are also out of the UEFA Cup having lost 4-2 on aggregate to Sporting Lisbon, and face a heavy fine or even a ban because of crowd trouble during the home, second leg. A firecracker exploded near Sporting keeper Ricardo, then the game was temporarily interrupted after the Portuguese players were pelted with cigarette lighters.

Heerenveen were another UEFA Cup casualty, losing 4-2 to Newcastle, leaving AZ, who beat Alemannia Aachen 2-1, as the only Dutch survivors.

National coach Marco Van Basten's experimental defence proved up to the job in the 0-0 draw with England in Birmingham, with Hamburg's Khalid Boulahrouz particularly impressive. Heerenveen winger Ugur Yildirim made his debut after snubbing Turkey, his parents' country.

USA defender John O'Brien, released by Ajax, is set to join Den Haag, who have signed Portuguese striker Edson on loan from Tottenham. Portsmouth keeper Harald Wapenaar joined Vitesse, while PSV landed Brazilian striker Robert from Mexico's Atlas.

Jasper Goedbloed

Running on empty...Koeman had lost the inspiration to lift Ajax, and the Auxerre defeat proved the last straw

PORTUGAL

Three-way split

The League title race appears set to go to the wire, with FC Porto, Sporting Lisbon and Benfica all tied on 42 points and 11 rounds to go. Picking the winner of the hottest race in the championship's history is anyone's guess but it will be a rollercoaster ride to the finish.

Having recovered from an erratic start, Sporting currently have the momentum. Inspired by top scorer Liedson, the Lions of Lisbon steamrollered past Rio Ave and Estoril in the League and Feyenoord in the UEFA Cup.

Benfica's hopes of ending their 10-year title drought are still alive, although the defensive style introduced by coach Giovanni Trapattoni still has its critics. The club's elimination from the UEFA Cup by CSKA Moscow did not do much for the Italian's popularity among supporters either.

Jose Couceiro has made a solid if unspectacular start as coach of FC Porto. The Dragons' main concern must be their home form – they drew three League games at the Dragao and lost once in the three months to the start of March, a carelessness they will have to arrest to have much hope of winning the championship for the third season running.

Pedro Pinto

AUSTRIA

Stronach plans life bans for betters

League president Frank Stronach has said players who bet against their own team will receive lifetime bans after top division side Bregenz were

implicated in the betting scandal that has engulfed German football.

Robert Hoyzer, the German referee at the heart of the controversy, accused bottom-of-the-table Bregenz of involvement, alleging Austrian League matches had been fixed as well as German League and Cup games.

Stronach, the Austro-Canadian billionaire who also owns Austria Wien, said: "Both players and managers who are betting against their own team or other League clubs will be banned for life." He added that he believed Austrian referees to be "excellent and highly upright… showing honesty and fairness. We want to make sure that players and managers pick up these virtues."

Harry Miltner

REPUBLIC OF IRELAND

Dolan fired after row

Pat Dolan, who led Cork City to runners-up spot in the League last season, was sacked two weeks before the start of the new season after a row with club chairman Brian Lennox. Dolan's departure cleared the way for the return of Damien Richardson after an absence of 11 years.

Eircom League clubs are guaranteed a substantial pay-out from a new television deal. Under the deal, 30 League and FAI Cup games will be shown next season on three stations – RTE, TG4 and Setanta – while TV3 will continue with their highlights programme on Monday nights. Interim FAI CEO John Delaney said: "This groundbreaking deal will see unprecedented exposure of the game. Television rights hold the key to investing in our domestic game."

Northern Ireland champions Linfield have made their first visit to Derry City's Brandywell ground since 1969 for a pre-season friendly, which ended 1-1. The two sides used to meet regularly before Derry were forced to quit the League at the height of The Troubles in the 1970s. The club joined the Republic's League structure in 1985.

The game went off without incident though afterwards local youths stoned buses taking Linfield supporters back to Belfast.

Sean Creedon

LIECHTENSTEIN

Vaduz go top

Vaduz leapfrogged Yverdon to go top of the Swiss Challenge League after beating lowly Meyrin 3-1 away in their first game after the winter break.

The win put them a point clear of Yverdon, who had a game in hand, and on course for automatic promotion to the Swiss top division.

Vaduz made light of the absences of new forward Igor Manojlovic (from Radnicki Belgrade) and last season's top scorer, Benjamin Fischer, to win with goals from former Bologna defender Steve Gohouri and Finns Antti Sumiala and Antti Pohja.

Graeme Crawford

It's no joke…Vercauteren and assistant Glen De Boeck had a shock at Anderlecht

Age no barrier for Waseige

BELGIUM

AT AN AGE when most coaches would be contemplating retirement, 65-year-old Robert Waseige has taken the reins at bottom side FC Brussels.

The former national boss's return to club management came as a shock, even to his new employers. "We were surprised he took the job," admitted commercial director Gino Gylain. "But we need his experience both in the short and long term."

Waseige, who succeeds Emilio Ferrera, has signed on until the end of the season but will be offered a new deal if he saves them from the drop.

Waseige took Belgium to the second stage of the 2002 World Cup finals, where they lost gallantly to Brazil, but he was a conspicuous failure during a subsequent six-month spell in charge of Algeria.

Franky Vercauteren, who succeeded the sacked Hugo Broos at champions Anderlecht, suffered a shock 1-0 home League defeat by relegation-threatened Ostende in his first game in charge.

The following week Ostende beat fellow strugglers St Truiden 1-0 to end visiting coach Marc Wilmots' reign.

Nicholas Harling

Over and out…Basle's Julio Rossi takes a tumble during the UEFA Cup exit to Lille

Double blow for Basle

SWITZERLAND

CHAMPIONS AND LEADERS Basle suffered a double blow as the season resumed after the winter break, losing 3-1 at St Gallen in the League and going out of the UEFA Cup to Lille.

"We lacked match fitness and a competitive edge," acknowledged coach Christian Gross after the 2-0 aggregate defeat by the high-flying French side.

Bankrupt top division Servette have had their results annulled and will be forced to play in the inter-regional Liga 1 next season. As a consequence, there will be no automatic relegation from the top division this term, with the bottom side of the remaining nine playing off against the Challenge League runners-up for a place in next season's top flight. The Challenge League winners will be promoted automatically.

Ralph Zloczower has been re-elected unopposed as Football League president despite being roundly criticised for lack of leadership over the eventual banning of international forward Alex Frei, who was caught on TV spitting at England's Steven Gerrard during the group match at Euro 2004.

Ivar von Rulach

Norwegians in charge

ROYAL LEAGUE

THE RELATIVE STRENGTH of Norwegian club football was clear at the end of the first group stage of Scandinavia's new Royal League tournament. Of the four Norwegian clubs that entered the 12-team competition, only Tromso failed to make the last six. Valerenga won five and drew one of their six games to top Group 1, with Norwegian champions Rosenborg finishing runners-up. And Brann qualified by coming second in Group 3 behind Malmo of Sweden.

By contrast, FC Copenhagen were the only Danish club to survive the opening group phase, topping Group 2, with Brondby, Esbjerg and OB Odense all missing out. IFK Gothenburg took the remaining last-six place as runners-up to FC Copenhagen, as the other Swedish representatives – Djurgardens and Halmstads – both dropped out.

Valerenga, who missed out on the Norwegian championship last term only on goals scored, seem to be stronger than ever, despite having lost central defender Erik Hagen and midfielder Jorgen Jalland to Russian clubs during the winter. The Oslo side drew 1-1 at home to Esbjerg in their final first stage group game to extend their unbeaten competitive game run to 17. But perhaps more significant, at least in terms of the new Norwegian League campaign, is that they beat Rosenborg home and away. Their 1-0 win in Trondheim, thanks to a Freddy Dos Santos penalty, was the third time in succession they had beaten Rosenborg on their home patch.

Valerenga have been further boosted by the decision of international striker Steffen Iversen to stay on for another season, and by their relatively easy draw for the second group stage – facing IFK Gothenburg and Brann, instead of going into the champion-heavy pool on the other half of the draw.

FC Copenhagen made sure of their progress thanks to a 2-0 victory away to eternal rivals Brondby. The game was watched by 14,358, the second highest attendance of the competition. The clubs' first meeting attracted the biggest crowd, 21,763.

By contrast, the OB Odense-Halmstads match attracted a meagre crowd of 86, while only 272 turned up for the Brann-OB game. The crowd figures show the tournament has much to do if it is to become an established part of the football scene. FC Copenhagen now meet Rosenborg and Malmo in the second group phase. They are the respective champions of Denmark, Norway and Sweden, and if their match-ups cannot entice the fans to watch, the Royal League will surely struggle in its present form.

The winners of the two second-stage groups will meet in the Final on May 26.

Sigurd Odegaard & Jim Holden

Penalty prize...Dos Santos brought Valerenga victory at Rosenborg

SWEDEN

IFK poised to challenge

IFK Gothenburg's comfortable progress to the second phase of the Royal League suggests that they could be about to mount a serious League challenge to defending champions Malmo, also still in contention for the Scandinavian competition.

Gothenburg have not won the Swedish League since 1996, but now have an exciting mix of young talent and veterans. The youthful promise comes from the likes of big centre-forward George Mourad and Swedish Under-21 full-back Adam Johansson, recently signed from neighbours Vastra Frolunda. The club also boast highly experienced players such as former Everton midfielder Niclas Alexandersson, whose form for Gothenburg earnt him a recent recall to the national team squad.

But the club's trump card could well be new Norwegian coach Arne Erlandsen. The former Lillestrom player and coach promotes direct, aggressive football, and so far the results have been encouraging.

One player who won't be involved in Gothenburg's title quest will be Magnus Erlingmark, who has retired at 36. The defender, who became a cult figure among the fans, won six League titles with Gothenburg and was capped 37 times by Sweden.

Pentti Hietanen

FINLAND

Roiha double earns win

Cercle Brugge forward Paulus Roiha scored both goals, his first at full international level, as Finland beat hosts Cyprus 2-1 in the Final of a four-team tournament in February. Roiha's second goal was set up by Charlton's Jonatan Johansson, who had scored only his second Finland goal in six years when putting the team ahead in the 2-1 semi-final victory over Latvia. Keijo Huusko scored the winner. Johansson had been given his chance in the starting line-up because of injuries to Mikael Forssell and Shefki Kuqi.

FC Jazz, League champions in 1994 and 1996, have finally gone out of business after long-standing financial problems. The club finished second bottom of the top division last season and subsequently lost a relegation/promotion play-off against IFK Mariehamn.

MyPa have signed Paraguayan stopper Hugo Miranda, while FC Lahti brought back Finnish Under-21 defender Heikka Haara from Allianssi.

Pentti Hietanen

Torpedo time...Enar Jaager

ICELAND

FH reign in Reykjavik

Champions FH served notice of intent for the League campaign by defeating newly-promoted Valur 2-1 in the Reykjavik Cup Final. The Icelandic Cup should attract more entrants after the FA voted to allow clubs registered with the Icelandic Sports Council to enter from 2006. Only FA-registered clubs have been eligible to enter until now.

Rab Christie

ESTONIA

Third international takes Torpedo route

Central defender Enar Jaager has become the third Estonian international to join Torpedo Moscow in the past 18 months. The 20-year-old former Flora Tallinn player joins Andres Oper and Andrei Stepanov in the Russian capital.

Meanwhile, Flora midfielder Joel Lindpere has gone to CSKA Sofia on a six-month loan, and Levadia Tallinn's Eduard Ratnikov is also now in Bulgaria, joining Beroe Stara Zagora in a two-and-a-half-year deal.

Former Zenit St Petersburg player Vyacheslav Bulavin has been appointed coach of Tallinna VMK, last season's runners-up, but he has lost three key players: midfielder Liivo Leetma (to Finland's KooTeePee), forward Andrei Krolov (Dinamo Tallinn) and former national team defender Toomas Kallaste (retired).

Andres Must

LATVIA

Champions Skonto have six points docked

Champions Skonto Riga will start the new League season with minus six points, FIFA's punishment for the club failing to pay a share of a transfer fee to a lower division side. Skonto still owe third level Ofriss Riga £180,000 for the sale of Eriks Pelcis to South Korean side Anyang Cheetahs in 2000. Pelcis originally moved to Skonto from Ofriss in a deal that guaranteed the lower league side a share in any future transfer fee.

Newly-promoted Venta Ventspils have signed a number of well-known players ahead of the League season, bringing in former Kyiv Dynamo and Arsenal defender Oleh Luzhnyi as player-coach, plus Latvian internationals Girts Karlsons and Valentins Lobanovs and Belarus midfielder Alexander Khatskevich.

Andres Must

WALES

Moran's return boosts Rhyl

Andy Moran, last season's League top scorer, has returned to action for champions Rhyl after completing an eight-month suspension for failing a drug test. His comeback is a major boost for the club, who have an eye on repeating their treble of last season.

Moran's first appearance was in Rhyl's League Cup semi-final victory over Port Talbot Town, while the club were also through to the Welsh Cup quarter-finals and were three points behind leaders Total Network Solutions in the League.

John Toshack made a good start as national coach, with his under-strength side producing a solid 2-0 win over Hungary in their February friendly.

Mel Thomas

NORTHERN IRELAND

Welders show mettle

First Division Harland and Wolff Welders provided the shock result of the Irish Cup sixth round when beating top division Lisburn Distillery 2-1 away in a replay. The winner came from veteran midfielder Tom Cleland, a former Distillery player. Holders Glentoran also reached the quarter-finals, beating Linfield 3-0 away in a replay.

Stephen Baxter has been appointed manager of Crusaders, the struggling Premier League side with whom he used to be a star striker. It is the 39-year-old's first job in management.

Northern Ireland put in a disappointing performance during their 1-0 home friendly defeat by a young, experimental Canadian side in February. The loss came despite Canada playing with 10 men for more than an hour after the sending-off of defender Gabriel Gervais. The only bright point for Lawrie Sanchez's men was the debut display of 20-year-old Aston Villa midfielder Steve Davis.

Roy Kitson

Rangers end away-day blues

SCOTLAND

SECOND-HALF goals from Gregory Vignal and Nacho Novo gave Rangers their first victory away to Celtic for five years and the slight edge in the title race. However, the leaders then slipped up at Ibrox, only drawing with Inverness Caledonian Thistle, to give Celtic, with two games in hand, the chance to retake top spot.

Craig Bellamy, Celtic's loan signing from Newcastle, made his debut in the Old Firm game but had to wait another week to score his first goal – in the 5-0 victory over Clyde in the Scottish Cup quarter-finals. Celtic now face Hearts, with Hibernian meeting Dundee United. The two Edinburgh sides have not met in the Cup Final since 1896.

Hearts' financial worries have been eased by the takeover by Lithuanian businessman Vladimir Romanov.

Alan Fairley

Watch your back...Rangers goalscorer Gregory Vignal comes under pressure from Celtic's John Hartson

Controversy...Ali Tandogan's free-kick goal was allowed to stand although referee Muftuoglu had whistled to halt play because of encroachment by a Besiktas defender

Whistle blown on ref error

TURKEY

FOR THE SECOND SEASON running, a League game has been ordered to be replayed following a refereeing mistake. The February game between Besiktas and Genclerbirligi has had to be restaged after official Kuddusi Muftuoglu admitted he had blown the whistle to stop a free-kick being taken and then let the ensuing goal stand.

Muftuoglu originally wanted to reprimand a Besiktas player for breaking from the wall, but then decided that allowing Ali Tandogan's goal for Genclerbirligi to stand was suitable punishment, and said nothing until the media furore the next day. The game had ended 1-1.

Last term, Fenerbahce faced Caykur Rizespor for a second time after referee Ali Aydin forgot to send off a Rizespor player he had booked twice. There were cries of foul play when Fener were allowed to field players in the rematch who had not been on their books at the time of the original game, especially since the club won the second staging 4-1 after only drawing the first.

Aydin, a respected official, was badly affected by his faux pas and has now retired. Muftuoglu, one of Turkey's seven UEFA referees, is still active but clearly under pressure.

At least the repeat of the Besiktas-Genclerbirligi game will have little effect on the title outcome, since both are a long way behind leaders Fenerbahce.

With Galatasaray failing again to find the consistency of former years, Trabzonspor have emerged as Fener's closest challengers. Last season's runners-up, now under former national coach Senol Gunes, beat Denizlispor 3-0 in late February to go above Galatasaray, four points behind Fener. Fatih Tekke scored two of the goals, taking his season tally to 19, to increase his lead at the top of the national scorers' chart.

A new law aimed at wiping out violence and corruption within the Turkish game has led to the conviction of no fewer than 295 so-called "sport criminals". Most offenders found guilty of unruly behaviour receive a fine of around £100, but 98 people have been banned from games for six months, and 17 for four months.

Suna Erdem

CROATIA

Mamic makes match-fixing claim

Croatia's first official match-fixing investigation has been launched after claims by Dinamo Zagreb vice-president Zdravko Mamic that Hajduk Split's 3-1 win over Zadar in November was rigged.

Hajduk, the defending champions, were two points clear of Rijeka at the top after 19 rounds, while arch-rivals Dinamo remained in seventh place after losing their first match of the spring campaign, 2-1 at home to FC Zagreb. The defeat increased the chances of Dinamo missing out on the six-team championship play-offs, an unthinkable scenario until this season. The home fans reacted angrily to the defeat, demanding the resignation of both Mamic and coach Ilija Loncarevic.

Zdravko Reic

SLOVENIA

Country mourns Botonjic

Slovenia has been stunned by the death of FC Ljubljana goalkeeper Nedzad Botonjic, who collapsed during a training session. The 27-year-old's brother Damir, also a keeper, has returned from Genclerbirligi in Turkey to play for Ljubljana for the rest of the season in memory of Nedzad.

Rudi Zavrl has been re-elected as federation president until 2009 despite efforts to unseat him.

Olimpija, third in the top division at the winter break, will be demoted to the third level at the end of the season after being declared bankrupt.

Zdravko Reic

BOSNIA-HERZEGOVINA

Do or die for Blaz's men

The worst snowfalls for 30 years prevented the League campaign from resuming, leaving the forthcoming World Cup fixtures in focus.

Bosnia face Belgium away and then Lithuania at home at the end of March knowing only two wins will keep them in the running for Germany 2006. Blaz Sliskovic's team have done well so far in qualifying Group 7, drawing at home with both Spain and Serbia & Montenegro but

the pressure is now on to show both their ability to perform away from home and find a winning mentality.

Zdravko Reic

MACEDONIA

Serb Santrac handed reins

Serb Slobodan Santrac has become the first foreign coach of the national team following the resignation of Dragan Kanatlarovski in the wake of a double World Cup disaster against Andorra. Unofficially, Santrac, formerly coach of Yugoslavia and Saudi Arabia, has the Macedonia job until the end of the Euro 2008 qualifiers.

Kanatlarovski remained in charge following the shock 1-0 defeat in Andorra in October, largely thanks to Macedonia's previous good performances in the qualifiers – a narrow, last-minute 2-1 defeat away to Romania and a 2-2 home draw against Holland. However, his position became untenable after his charges could only draw 0-0 with Andorra in the return last month.

The two results were milestones for the Pyrenean principality – their first victory followed by their first away point in a competitive match.

Rabotnicki made a winning start as the League campaign resumed, to stay 10 points clear of Vardar.

Michel Stojmanovski

ISRAEL

Nir so far from fitness

Israel will go into the home World Cup qualifiers against the Republic of Ireland and France without first-choice goalkeeper Nir Davidovich, who has been sidelined by a groin injury. Dudu Awat is set to replace Davidovich in the late March games in what will be his first appearances in the current qualifying campaign.

Eyal Berkovic has joined Maccabi Tel Aviv after nine years with British clubs, having been snubbed by his first choice – champions and runaway leaders Maccabi Haifa. The media blamed a long-running feud between Berkovic and Haifa owner Yaacov Shahar and coach Ronnie Levy, though the club denied this.

Haifa have all but retained the title, leading by 18 points from Maccabi Petach Tikva with 10 games to play. Hapoel Haifa look doomed to relegation, while fellow strugglers Hapoel Be'er Sheva have reappointed Michael Kadosh as coach after an 18-month absence in a bid to stay up.

Ori Lewis

MALTA

Sliema stay on course

Defending champions Sliema got off to a fine start in the championship play-off pool, winning their first two games against Floriana and Marsaxlokk to stay three points clear of Valletta. The leaders were further boosted when coach Edward Aquilina agreed to remain in charge next season. Aquilina has led Sliema to the title for the past two seasons and is aiming for a hat-trick to emulate the feat he achieved as a player.

Domenico Aquilina

In question...Panionios (red) play their controversial UEFA Cup tie with Dinamo Tbilisi

Inquiry launched into rigging ring claims

GREECE

FORMER REFEREES, a player's agent and the brother of an international player are among those implicated by a man known as Costas S in an alleged match-fixing ring based in Thessaloniki.

Costas S was reportedly described by controversial German referee Robert Hoyzer as the "Greek link" between the Thessaloniki ring and three Croatians arrested in Germany for alleged match-fixing in that country. Hoyzer's comments and information extracted from a Croatian mafia group have been handed to public prosecutors in Athens and Thessaloniki for further inquiry. Meanwhile, UEFA want to question a number of Panionios players, whose UEFA Cup match against Dinamo Tbilisi last December is among the games under investigation.

Four Olympiakos fans have received jail sentences ranging from six to 15 months for their part in the violence that followed their side's 2-1 League defeat by struggling Cretans Ergotelis in February. Plastic seats were ripped out and fires started in the stands of the Pancretan stadium, built for last year's Olympics.

Lou Economopoulos

10-man Partizan go through

SERBIA & MONTENEGRO

PARTIZAN BELGRADE were rewarded with a tie against CSKA Moscow after beating Ukrainians Dnipro 3-2 on aggregate in the UEFA Cup first knockout round. Under-21 international Miroslav Radovic scored the only goal of the second leg, in Ukraine, in the 88th minute to put Partizan through after captain Sasa Ilic was sent off just before half-time.

The national team made it five clean sheets in a row when drawing 0-0 with Bulgaria in a February friendly on a bitterly cold day in Sofia.

At home, the domestic spring campaign also kicked off in wintry conditions, with two fixtures postponed because of snow. Leaders Partizan were one of the teams affected, allowing Red Star, 2-0 winners at Borac, to join them at the top. The day before, nine Red Star players signed contract extensions.

Vladimir Novak

Snow business...Partizan's Odita (stripes) tussles with Yezerskyi of Dnipro during the UEFA Cup first leg in Belgrade

Road to Moscow...Porto's Derlei heads the arrivals from the Portuguese League

Dinamo sign foreign legion

RUSSIA

DINAMO MOSCOW appear unconcerned about the Russian Premier League's new limits on the use of foreign players after signing no fewer than seven from the Portuguese League. They include Brazilian striker Derlei, from European champions FC Porto, while Dinamo have already lined up his former team-mates Costinha and Maniche and possibly Vitor Baia for purchase next summer.

From this season, top-flight clubs are allowed to have only eight foreigners on their books and only five of them will be allowed on the pitch at any one time.

Ironically, Oleg Romantsev, Dinamo's new coach, used to be vociferous in his criticism of the influx of foreigners into the Russian game when he was the boss of a successful Moscow Spartak side.

Georgi Yartsev, a former assistant to Romantsev, is under renewed pressure to keep his national team post after Russia lost 2-0 to Italy in Cagliari in a February friendly. Failure to secure wins against both Liechtenstein and Estonia in World Cup qualifiers at the end of March will surely spell the end for the beleaguered coach.

Rotor Volgograd, who were relegated from the top division last season, have gone out of business because of financial difficulties.

Victor Gusev

CZECH REPUBLIC

Kangaroos out in the cold

Bankrupt Bohemians face life in the wilderness after being expelled from the Second Division. The Czech FA took the decision to withdraw the Prague club's licence after they failed to get their financial house in order.

The Kangaroos, League champions in 1983, have had their autumn results annulled and been officially relegated, though how far they now fall remains uncertain. To secure a place in next season's CFL, the regional Third Division, Bohemians will have to pay the FA a fine of £70,000 for not completing the current Second Division season. If the club can't pay, they stand to be relegated to the lowest levels of the Prague amateur competition.

Slovan Liberec, League champions in 2002, are the fourth Czech club to be punished for match-fixing. The club have been docked six points after being found guilty of influencing the outcome of last season's 3-0 home win over Zlin. Top division sides Slovacko and Opava had 12 points and six points deducted respectively, while Second Division Viktoria Zizkov also had 12 points docked for their part in the scandal.

Slavia Prague playmaker Vaclav Kolousek has returned to competitive action after being diagnosed with acute leukaemia last May. He appeared as a second-half substitute in Slavia's 3-2 win over Sigma Olomouc on the first day of the spring League campaign. The result took the club up to second place behind Sparta, who under new coach Jaroslav Hrebik won 1-0 in Opava to extend their lead to 11 points.

Sam Beckwith

BULGARIA

Spasov fired by CSKA

CSKA Sofia made the surprise decision to switch coaches despite leading the League and just four days before the spring campaign got under way. Ferario Spasov, in charge for 12 months, has been replaced by former Partizan Belgrade boss Miodrag Jesic after apparently paying the price for failing to lead CSKA further in European competition. The team failed to reach the UEFA Cup group stage after a 4-3 aggregate defeat by Steaua Bucharest.

Jesic got off to a winning start, with his new charges beating Rodopa 1-0 at home in the first League game of the year to maintain their goal difference lead over capital rivals Levski.

Wisla still favourites for triple crown

POLAND

UNBEATEN LEAGUE LEADERS Wisla Krakow are still favourites to land the championship crown for the third season running despite the departure of the club owner and two key players during the winter. Boguslaw Cupial has sold his share of the club, while midfielders Damian Gorawski and Miroslaw Szymkowiak left for FC Moscow and Trabzonspor respectively.

Wisla held an eight-point lead over second-placed Legia Warsaw at the break and still have star player Maciej Zurawski to call upon. Only just, however. Zurawski, the club's leading scorer, very nearly joined Szymkowiak at Trabzonspor, who were so keen to take him on loan until the end of the season, at a cost of £350,000, that they persuaded the Turkish FA to extend the winter transfer deadline by a day. However, Wisla claimed Trabzonspor's bank guarantees were not satisfactory and pulled out of the deal.

International midfielder Sebastian Mila has become the third Pole to sign for Austria Wien, joining ex-internationals Krzysztof Ratajczyk and Radoslaw Gilewicz from Groclin Grodzisk.

National coach Pawel Janas admitted his side were poor during the surprise 3-1 home friendly defeat by Belarus, adding: "I needed such a friendly to see how we would play after the winter break. And I know that we must do better in the coming [World Cup] qualifiers."

The coach handed Hannover 96 central defender Dariusz Zuraw his first cap at 32 to replace the injured Jacek Bak but he failed to shine.

Dariusz Kurowski

Staying...Maciej Zurawski

Shakhtar keep on winning

UKRAINE

THE LEAGUE TOP two both won as the season resumed, Shakhtar beating Illichivets 1-0 away to stay a point clear of Kyiv Dynamo, 2-0 winners over Kryvbas at home. But they had different UEFA Cup fortunes – Shakhtar marched into the last 16 after a 2-1 aggregate win over Schalke as Dynamo lost 2-0 to Villarreal.

Metalurh Donetsk's Peruvian striker Andres Mendoza scored the only goal against Arsenal Kyiv to keep his side third, seven points behind Shakhtar.

Interestingly, the top three included only five Ukrainians between them in their starting line-ups, a reflection of the continuing foreign influx. New arrivals include Serbia & Montenegro keeper Vladimir Disljenkovic at Metalurh from Red Star Belgrade and Brazilian central defender Rodrigo at Kyiv Dynamo from Sao Paulo. Dynamo have released Nigerian forward Lucky Idakhor, now at Inter of Azerbaijan, and loaned Georgia defender Alexander Amisulashvili to Dnipro.

Shakhtar have lined up Brazilian midfielder Fernandinho for a summer move from Atletico Paranaense, while loaning Ukraine midfielder Adrian Pukanych and forward Sergiy Pivnenko to Illichivets.

Stepan Matviiv has been appointed head coach of bottom club Borysfen, still without a win after losing 2-1 away to Tavriya on the first day back.

Oleg Zadernovsky

Euro night...Shakhtar v Schalke in the UEFA Cup

CSKA have also lost captain Todor Yanchev, sold to Shinnik Yaroslavl in Russia, while forward Velizar Dimitrov has been sidelined by injury for the rest of the season.

Meanwhile, Levski have sold international defender Ilian Stoyanov to Japan's JEF United Ichihara following a contract dispute. Stoyanov had not trained with the Levski first team for several weeks after failing to agree terms on a new deal.

Michael Bowesfield

ROMANIA

Steaua recapture days of glory

Steaua Bucharest rekindled memories of former European glories when beating Spanish champions Valencia on penalties to reach the last 16 of the UEFA Cup. Teenager Andrei Cristea was the hero of the second leg, scoring twice in the second half to level the aggregate score at 2-2 before his team won the shoot-out 4-3.

The victory inspired Steaua, at last, to decide on a date for a promised farewell match for Marius Lacatus, one of the heroes of the club's 1986 European Cup triumph over Barcelona, also on penalties. The event will take place on May 7, the anniversary of that victory.

Radu Timofte

HUNGARY

Storm breaks as FA chief delays restart

FA president Imre Bozoky was roundly criticised for postponing the League restart for a week due to bad weather shortly after being re-elected for a second five-year term by a large majority.

The postponement meant the winter break had lasted more than three months, a situation that infuriated a number of coaches.

"I can't even say what the effect of such a long break will be on my preparations," said national team boss Lothar Matthaus, whose side play a World Cup qualifier at home to Bulgaria on March 30. "They play football in muddy conditions in most places; why not here? We could have played a couple of League rounds in January!"

Ferencvaros coach Csaba Laszlo was equally scathing, saying: "I had prepared my players for an early March start. With such a long winter break, we are years behind Europe."

Peterjon Cresswell

SLOVAKIA

Stevko faces sidelines

The future of Ruzomberok's top striker, Roland Stevko, remains unclear in the wake of two failed transfer deals over the winter. Club president Lubomir Moravcik announced that Stevko, last season's League top scorer and who has 11 goals during the current campaign, would start the spring programme in the reserves after publicly questioning his conduct during the recent abortive move to Czech side Brno.

Official club statements have suggested the forward lacks motivation, and coach Ivan Hlucko said that while Stevko would be allowed to train with the Ruzomberok first team he could not guarantee him a first-team place.

Pavol Stracansky

ARMENIA

New format for top flight

The top division is to have a new format for 2005, with the introduction of championship and relegation play-off pools after the regular season.

The nine teams will all play each other home and away, after which the top six will contest another round-robin group to decide the champions. Meanwhile, the bottom three will play each other, with the side gaining fewest points going into a play-off against the second level runners-up.

The second level champions will take their place automatically in an expanded 10-team top division for 2006.

Vladimir Kalinkovich

Taking it easy...Diego Tardelli (right) and his Sao Paulo team-mates enjoyed a comfortable victory over neighbours Palmeiras

Leao hoists Tricolor high

BRAZIL

NEVER MIND CORINTHIANS and their £14million team. It was Sao Paulo, without big signings and minus coach Emerson Leao's bleached hair, who made the early running in the Paulista state championship.

The Tricolor blasted 25 goals and handed crisis-hit Palmeiras a 3-0 drubbing as they won seven of their first eight games to hold top spot. Corinthians, meanwhile, sacked coach Tite after they managed only eight goals in the same number of matches and were seventh. Ex-Argentina captain and coach Daniel Passarella arrived as the unfortunate Tite's high-profile replacement.

While the newly-rich Corinthians had been busily brandishing their chequebooks, Leao used the close season to revitalise Sao Paulo without relying on big-money buys. Central defender Diego Lugano and striker Diego Tardelli, who had both been sidelined under previous coach Cuca, were given Leao's backing, and both responded to the incentive. Tardelli scored eight goals in as many games, while Uruguayan Lugano was superb at the heart of the defence.

Leao was once an abrasive character, seemingly incapable of staying more than a few months at any club. He was also unceremoniously ditched as national coach after Brazil finished only fourth at the 2001 Confederations Cup when forced by his federation (CBF) to field a C team. Now, the former Brazil keeper has developed into an excellent coach. He led Santos to the Brazilian title in 2002, raised Sao Paulo from seventh place to third in last year's national championship after taking over in September and now has inspired his side to their impressive Paulista start.

There are no cagey opening half-hours where Leao is concerned. His Sao Paulo team go straight on to the attack and attempt to wrap up the match as quickly as possible.

Leao admits he has matured greatly since his dismissal from the Brazil post. For the first time in 28 years, he has stopped dying his hair; instead of a shocking flame-orange colour, it is now a natural white. "I've changed my concepts," he said recently. "I'm older and more mature. Santos did me a world of good."

Not that Brazil's referees would know it. Leao launched one of his habitual attacks on match officials after the 2-2 draw with Uniao Barbarense, the only Paulista game his side failed to win. "The referee changed the result of the match," he said. "We haven't had a penalty for more than 30 games. That can't be right. When referees make mistakes, they should be punished."

Instead, it was Leao who found himself in hot water. The competition's disciplinary tribunal handed him a 60-day touchline ban, although this was overturned days later pending an appeal, allowing him to sit on the bench for the derby against Palmeiras.

In typical style, Sao Paulo went straight for the jugular, and the writing was on the wall for Palmeiras when Grafite won a penalty after only five minutes. Tardelli converted and, after that, there was never going to be any doubt about the outcome.

Goalkeeper Rogerio Ceni scored a brilliant free-kick, the 35th goal of his career, and former Hertha Berlin striker Luizao headed the third to hand Candinho a miserable start as Palmeiras coach.

Candinho had been wheeled in to replace Estevam Soares, who was given the chop following a bizarre substitution in the previous week's match against Uniao Sao Joao. With Palmeiras leading 2-1, Soares brought on defensive midfielder Diego Souza to help tighten up at the back. Seven minutes later, Uniao

Significant presence...Robinho v Hong Kong

equalised – and Diego Souza was replaced by a forward.

The player was not amused. He swore at Soares on his way to the dressing-room and then insulted him on live television. Soares' position had already come under pressure after some poor results, and the club decided this was the perfect excuse to dispense with his services.

There were similar tantrums at Corinthians, where midfielder Fininho stuck his finger up at the club's supporters after being substituted and jeered off the field during a Copa Brasil tie against Sampaio Correa. He was quickly offloaded to Flamengo – a real punishment given the turbulent state of the Rio de Janeiro club.

Corinthians' problems had been cruelly exposed four days earlier when they were thumped 3-0 by Santos. This match was the first real test for Corinthians since they signed their £20m partnership with London-based Media Sports Investments and had been billed as a duel between their £10m signing Carlos Tevez of Argentina and Santos starlet Robinho. It turned into a no-contest.

Robinho set up Leo for Santos's first goal and generally tormented the visiting defence during the first half. Shortly after the break he added two more himself, first latching on to Deivid's flicked pass to sweep the ball past Fabio Costa and then dispossessing Betao to fire home the third. Tevez barely saw the ball.

Five days before facing Corinthians, Robinho had started a senior international for the first time and scored his first goal in the 7-1 win away to Hong Kong. The 21-year-old's performance gave significance to a game that would otherwise have been merely yet another money-grabbing exercise by the CBF and co – the team's £525,000 appearance fee went straight into the coffers of Ambev, their drinks conglomerate sponsor. "Perhaps in 15 years' time, the game will be remembered for Robinho's first goal in the yellow shirt," wrote Juca Kfouri, columnist in the sports daily *Lance*. "It was Robinho who brought the team to life...Let's hope he never gets left out again."

But while the critics raved over Robinho, national coach Carlos Alberto Parreira was more impressed with the tackling and hard-running of midfielder Emerson, making his international return after 15 months. "A player such as Emerson, with more weight and strength, is very useful," said Parreira, adding that he had pencilled in the Juventus player for the visit to Uruguay for the World Cup qualifier at the end of March.

Brian Homewood

Strike puts season on hold

PERU

IF GARY NEVILLE really does fancy himself as a shop steward, he could learn a few things by taking a trip to Peru.

In 2003, the players' union, led by Francesco Manassero, staged a strike over unpaid wages that forced the championship to be abandoned. Now, the union has prevented this year's tournament from starting because some of the clubs have not been paying off their debts to the players as promised.

The players insist they have good reason to be militant. Until the union was formed four years ago, Peruvian clubs, they say, operated an almost feudal system in which the directors paid the players if they felt like it and fired them on a whim.

In 2003, the players decided to fight back. Claiming that some clubs owed up to four years' wages, they went on strike. A peace deal was finally negotiated when the clubs agreed to a schedule for paying players their dues.

A players' statute was also set up, recognising the profession, guaranteeing basic rights and setting up an arbitration panel based on FIFA guidelines to settle disputes between players and clubs.

However, Manassero says that Alianza Lima, last year's champions, and Universitario, another of the country's biggest clubs, have now fallen behind in the pay schedule.

The League suspended the championship just two days before it was due to start, blaming the union for a "hardline attitude and absolute lack of flexibility".

But Manassero's response was eloquent. "They can't be so irresponsible as to tell 46 families, who have been waiting four years for their wages, that they have to keep on waiting," he said. "It's not being hardline, it's being responsible."

To complicate matters further, the referees also decided to stop work. They said they were owed money, too, and were also fed up with having to pay their own expenses.

"We're abstaining from refereeing matches until they pay the whole debt," said Winston Reategui, a director of the referees' association. "There have been lots of promises of payment but everything has a limit."

Brian Homewood

Questions raised about De La Cuesta's treatment

COLOMBIA

Young promise...De La Cuesta played for Colombia at youth level

AS IN PERU, Colombia's players threatened to go on strike, but in their case over suspicions of reprisals against players who had become free agents against the will of their former clubs.

The dispute centred on the case of Jose De La Cuesta, who left Atletico Nacional in 2003 and now plays for Cadiz in Spain. De La Cuesta captained Colombia's Under-20s but has never been called up by the senior national team and there was widespread speculation that this was the result of behind-the-scenes pressure from Atletico Nacional on the Colombian federation (FCF).

Colombia defender Ivan Cordoba warned of drastic action, saying: "We're going to take some tough decisions if there is no solution, ranging from not playing for the national team to organising a players' strike in Colombia." Fellow international defender Mario Yepes added: "No player can be denied the right to play for the national team or to work because of administrative mistakes by the clubs."

In the end, the players backed down after talks with FCF president Oscar Astudillo.

Meanwhile, the Colombian championship, once a lucrative affair that attracted top players from all over the continent, kicked off with the teams burdened with chronic financial difficulties. Millonarios, anything but what their name suggests, are the most serious case. The club were officially declared bankrupt last year with debts of around £2million and they spent most of last year's closing championship hovering near the bottom of the table. Another club in trouble are America, four-times Libertadores Cup runners-up, who are receiving help from the Cali city government because they have been unable to find sponsors.

Real Cartagena are back in the top flight, replacing relegated Tulua, while Chico, the third Bogota club, have relocated to the colonial city of Tunja, around 120 kilometres north of the capital.

Quindio, from the city of Armenia, can expect more than their usually modest share of attention thanks to their striker Hugo Rodallega, who scored 11 goals as Colombia won the recent South American Under-20 Championship.

Brian Homewood

Lift-off...San Lorenzo's Hernan Peirone celebrates the first of his hat-trick against Boca Juniors

Closing opens with death and violence

ARGENTINA

THE START OF THE closing championship was marked by hooliganism and violence. A fan of opening champions Newell's Old Boys was killed in the stadium as he watched the team's last training session before their derby against Rosario Central. Nobody has been detained in relation to the incident, police saying only that it occurred in "confusing circumstances".

A Racing Club fan was stabbed during a home game against Olimpo, allegedly as part of an ongoing battle between two factions of the club's hooligan gang, while, two days later, police attacked Argentinos Juniors players after their match against Instituto in Cordoba. The players had been trying to protect their goalkeeper, whose hair had been pulled by a security agent, a former policeman.

A Lanus employee was allegedly punched in the face by a former president of visiting Gimnasia y Esgrima de La Plata, who had been asked for identification before being allowed into the dressing-room, and the following weekend the hooligan factions of Argentinos Juniors and Estudiantes de La Plata fought among themselves at their respective games. Colon Santa Fe players were unable to leave the pitch for 45 minutes after their 2-0 home defeat by Arsenal – their third in a row – having been pelted with stones and other missiles by fans who had stayed to protest.

The most talked-about match was Boca Juniors' 3-0 defeat away to San Lorenzo, for whom Hernan Peirone hit a hat-trick. Boca's average age was 31, against San Lorenzo's 25, and it showed. No doubt the players were also fatigued after the long journey back, involving change of flights, from playing Ecuador's Deportivo Cuenca in the Libertadores Cup three days before. Boca did get a 0-0 draw there but the display can hardly have encouraged coach Jorge Benitez.

He had said he would use different teams for League and Libertadores Cup matches, but must have realised that he barely has one strong team since he fielded virtually the same side against San Lorenzo that had played in Cuenca.

Boca are clearly missing a playmaker, but while Benitez had earmarked Colon's Colombian Giovanni Hernandez, the club would not agree to pay the asking price of £2.5million, just a quarter of the sum they received from the sale of Carlos Tevez to Corinthians.

River Plate attempted to strengthen their defence by buying Federico Dominguez (Velez Sarsfield), Carlos Diogo (Penarol) and bringing back Horacio Ameli (Mexico's America), but it is still suspect. They let in five goals in their first three games, though they won two and drew the other to share the lead with Estudiantes, Lanus and Rosario Central.

Eric Weil

Tecos go from bottom to top

MEXICO

TECOS UAG HAVE been the surprise package of the early rounds of the closing championship, leading their group with five wins out of seven games, while opening champions Pumas UNAM languish in fifth place.

Tecos finished bottom of their group in the opening campaign, and with the worst record in the whole top flight. But while they have effectively the same squad this time round, they have suddenly clicked. They are scoring with ease, as veteran South American forwards Carlos Maria Morales, Daniel Luduena and Eliomar Marcon have found their touch once more.

Cruz Azul, leading Group 2, were the only unbeaten side after seven rounds and are being fired by the good chemistry between strikers Francisco Fonseca and Cesar Delgado.

The national team prepared for their key World Cup qualifier against the USA buoyed by an encouraging performance in the 1-1 friendly draw with Colombia in late February. Mexico coped well with Colombia's excellent young, pacy side and should have won but Jaime Lozano missed a penalty.

Carlos Ramirez

Tecos for two...Marcon and Luduena's goal joy

Prize guys...Enyimba display their medals after retaining the Super Cup

Kick Off Nigeria

New-look Enyimba triumph again

AFRICAN SUPER CUP

ENYIMBA OF NIGERIA added the African Super Cup to their recent silverware haul with a 2-0 victory over Ghana's Hearts of Oak despite having had a massive clearout since winning the African Champions League in December.

Only five members of the side who beat Tunisia's Etoile Sahel on penalties to retain Africa's top club prize are still in the squad, with the rest having gone in search of more lucrative pastures.

The Super Cup, played in Enyimba's home town of Aba, was goalless after 90 minutes, but the hosts finally broke the deadlock seven minutes into extra-time when Mutiu Adegoke put the finishing touch to a goalmouth scramble. Adegoke turned provider for the second goal, scored by Benin striker Mouri Ogunbiyi five minutes into the second period.

Hearts, winners of the inaugural African Confederation Cup, had done well to hold Enyimba for so long because they had played with only 10 men since the 70th minute. Lawrence Adjei went off injured and the Ghanaians had already used their three substitutes.

Enyimba, who also won the Super Cup last year, should have wrapped the game up before the end of regular time but found Hearts keeper Sanni Mohamed in inspired form.

The visitors also played with a makeshift line-up after allowing several key players to go for trials at European and Asian clubs.

Mark Gleeson

ROUND-UP

CENTRAL AFRICA

CAMEROONIAN Georges Ambassa has signed for Portugal's Boavista after a year's suspension for attacking a referee while playing for Canon Yaounde. Cameroon's amateur team won the annual regional CEMAC Cup, beating Chad 1-0 in the Final in Gabon.

Cedric Mouamba has been named GABON'S footballer of the year.

EAST AFRICA

UGANDA'S FA has been suspended by the government and president Dennis Obua charged with embezzling funds. He has since resigned.

Former Ugandan international Jackson Mayanja has taken over as coach of Kiyovu in RWANDA.

Mohammed Kheri has been reappointed national coach of KENYA. He replaces Twahir Mufiddin, who left after the 5-1 defeat by Morocco in February's World Cup qualifier.

NORTH AFRICA

Al Ahly have won the EGYPTIAN League for a record 30th time after a runaway start to the season. They won 18 of their first 19 matches to clinch the title with seven rounds to go.

Five stadiums will be used for the 2006 African Nations Cup finals, to be held in Egypt. Cairo will have two venues – the 75,000-capacity International stadium, currently being refurbished, which will stage the opening match and the Final; and either the Arab Contractors or Military stadium. The three other venues will be Alexandria, Ismailia and Port Said. The finals will be held from January 20 to February 10 next year. The draw will be held in Cairo on October 20.

Djamel Menad is the new coach at runaway ALGERIAN League leaders USM Alger, who took the drastic step of firing Nouredine Saadi after a 3-0 defeat in a League match against CABBA. Frenchman Christian Coste replaces Moussa Saib as coach at second-placed JS Kabylie. Frenchman Herve Revelli, a former Benin national coach, has joined Entente Setif.

Impressive...how the new Ismailia stadium will look

WEST AFRICA

BENIN'S new national coach is Serge Deveze, who led the Under-20s to a surprise qualification for this year's World Youth Cup.

GHANA'S Asante Kotoko have appointed Malik Jabir as new coach, replacing German Hans-Dieter Schmidt.

MALI beat Nigeria's Under-20 side 3-0 in the Final of the four-nation WAFU Cup in Bamako.

LIBERIA have named Joseph Sayon as national coach.

Mark Gleeson

Bahrain hopes dip as Juricic quits

ASIAN WORLD CUP QUALIFIERS

BAHRAIN'S HOPES OF qualifying for their first World Cup were dealt a massive blow with the unexpected resignation of coach Srecko Juricic. The Croat's departure came less than a month before the second and third matches in Asia's final qualifying phase.

Juricic, who guided Bahrain to the semi-finals of the Asian Cup in China last year and to the last four of the Gulf Cup in January, handed in his notice at the start of March after receiving job offers from several Middle Eastern clubs. He had not accepted any of them as we went to press.

"We were surprised to get such a response from the coach," said Bahraini FA general secretary Ahmed Jassim. "He is one of the best that we worked with and we are depressed by his decision."

Bahrain, who drew 0-0 at home to Iran in their opening game of the second group phase, face North Korea in Pyongyang on March 25 and Asian champions Japan in Saitama five days later. The top two from the two Asian groups qualify automatically for the finals, with the third-placed sides getting a second chance through play-offs.

Hail and farewell...Juricic handed in his resignation after receiving offers from Middle Eastern clubs

The blow of Juricic's departure comes on the back of the continuing absence of prolific striker Ala'a Hubail, because of a knee injury. Hubail, joint top scorer at last year's Asian Cup and current top scorer in Qatar with Al Gharafah, is not expected to be available to Bahrain until the home World Cup game against Japan on June 3.

Hubail also missed the opening Group B game against Iran, played on the same night Japan eked out a fortuitous 2-1 win over North Korea in Saitama to go top of the standings. Gamba Osaka striker Masashi Oguro scored the winner three minutes into injury time after Nam Song-chol had cancelled out Mitsuo Ogasawara's early goal for the hosts. Japan's lacklustre showing allowed North Korea to take command and they were unlucky not to take anything from the game.

"I don't know if you can call this luck," said Japan coach Zico, overseeing yet another late win over inferior opposition. "If I have learned one thing in 30 years in football it is that until the referee blows the final whistle there is always time for the result to be decided."

But Japan's performance did little to enhance the reputation of the Brazilian, who has somehow managed to accumulate an impressive record of wins despite a string of inept displays.

There were no such problems for South Korea, who disposed of Kuwait in Seoul in Group A's opening round thanks to goals from Lee Dong-gook and Lee Young-pyo. "The whole team played well. Everybody worked hard," said manager Jo Bonfrere. "We knew that Kuwait were planning only to play on the counter-attack but we proved that we have a good defence."

The result put the Koreans top of table after Saudi Arabia and Uzbekistan played out a 1-1 draw in Tashkent in the group's other game.

Sami Al-Jaber, lured back to international football almost three years after retiring, gave the Saudis the lead with 15 minutes to go just after coming on as a substitute. Saudi keeper Mabrouk Zaid had kept the dominant Uzbeks at bay but could not prevent Anvarjon Soliev equalising in injury time.

"We could have won, but Zaid was magnificent," said Uzbekistan's German coach Hans Jurgen Gede. "I was not satisfied with our first-half performance, and only in the second half did they produce what I asked for."

Michael Church

ASIAN ROUND-UP

German Siegfried Held has been sacked as coach of THAILAND after less than six months in charge following his failure to lead the team beyond the group stages of December's Tiger Cup. New boss Charnwit Polcheewin is the fifth person to lead Thailand in the past 16 months.

Thai international midfielder Therdsak Chaiman was fined £1,100 by the Singapore FA after a mix-up regarding his date of birth on his player registration form following his return to Singapore Armed Forces ahead of the 2005 League season. Therdsak, who helped BEC Tero Sasana to the Asian Champions League Final in 2003, indicated on the form he was born in 1973, five years earlier than had been previously submitted to the FA during a stint in the S-League in 2002.

SAUDI ARABIA have decided to scrap their League's play-off system from next year, replacing it with a regular two-stage round-robin format, with the team with most points being crowned champions. Previously, the top four finishers in the League played off against one another to determine the destination of the title.

Home on loan...Geinrikh

UZBEKISTAN striker Alexander Geinrikh has returned to Pakhtakor on loan from CSKA Moscow as the Uzbek club look to boost their chances in the Asian Champions League.

Defending SOUTH KOREAN champions Suwon Bluewings got off to a flying start in the domestic season as they beat Cup-holders Busan I'Park 1-0 in the Super Cup. Brazilian striker Nadson scored the goal. FC Seoul have signed highly-rated 20-year-old Park Chu-young on a three-year deal.

Michael Church & Azam Mahmood

How's that for starters?...Washington and his Tokyo Verdy team-mates take the acclaim after winning the Xerox Super Cup

Washington wows on debut

JAPAN

BRAZILIAN FORWARD WASHINGTON enjoyed a stirring debut for Tokyo Verdy 1969, hitting both their regular-time goals in the Xerox Super Cup showdown with Yokohama F Marinos and then converting in the penalty shoot-out to help bring his side victory.

Washington, who scored a record 34 goals for Atletico Paranaense in the Brazilian championship last year, put the Emperor's Cup holders ahead in the 68th minute then hit a last-gasp second after League champions Marinos had replied through Masahiro Ohashi and Hayuma Tanaka.

Washington then converted his penalty as Verdy ran out 5-4 winners. Another debutant, 18-year-old South Korean defender Lee Gang-jin, signed recently from Suwon Bluewings, also scored in the shoot-out.

It was Verdy's second trophy in as many months, having beaten Jubilo Iwata 2-1 in the Emperor's Cup Final on New Year's Day. Previously they had not lifted any silverware since winning the Emperor's Cup in 1997.

"It is rare to win two Finals in two months," said manager Ossie Ardiles, "especially after not winning anything for so long. We'll enjoy celebrating this."

Marinos clearly missed injured key players Tatsuhiko Kubo, Naoki Matsuda, Ahn Jung-hwan and their own new Brazilian striker, Adhemar, formerly of Stuttgart.

The absences also affected Marinos' showing in the A3 East Asian Championship in South Korea, where they finished only third. The tournament, contested by the leading sides from Japan, South Korea and China, was won by K-League champions Suwon Bluewings.

Mike Plastow & Kiminori Sawada

Green light for Magenta

OCEANIA

NEW CALEDONIAN CHAMPIONS Magenta reached the Oceania Club Championship finals after trouncing Nikao of the Cook Islands 9-1 on aggregate in the preliminary round.

Michael Hmae hit a seven-minute hat-trick just before half-time in the first leg to put Magenta on their way to a 4-0 victory, and was on the scoresheet again in the 5-1 second leg thrashing.

Magenta now go into the eight-team finals in Tahiti, which start in May.

AUSTRALIA'S representatives will be the winners of a special seven-team knockout tournament, also to be staged in May. Perth Glory, the last National League champions, have been handed a bye into the semi-finals, where they will be joined by the winners of the ties between Sydney FC and Queensland Roar, Central Coast Mariners and Newcastle United Jets, and Adelaide United and Melbourne Victory. Australia's new A League gets under way in August.

Lautoka will represent FIJI after Ba, the champions-elect, were found to have fielded an unregistered player in several League matches.

Waikato FC secured the third and last spot in NEW ZEALAND'S national championship play-offs when beating fellow contenders Napier City 3-0 on the final weekend of the regular season. Auckland City and Waitakere United were the other qualifiers.

Former international defender Ricki Herbert has become the first New Zealander to coach the national team. Herbert, who played at the 1982 World Cup finals, was formerly national team technical director and was assistant to Mick Waitt at the 2004 Oceania Nations Cup.

Paul Moon

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Fans United, clubs divided

Hoping for a new dawn...two young fans watch a game at threatened Wrexham as the sun sets

David Conn on the plight of Wrexham, the 37th Football League club to become insolvent since the formation of the breakaway Premier League in 1992

A SUNNY BUT freezing afternoon at Wrexham's Racecourse Ground. The home side, in red, are playing Doncaster Rovers, in blue, a frantic, standard-enough battle in what traditionalists still think of as the Third Division, now rebranded as League One, in the hope of a snazzier future. Trinidadian Carlos Edwards weaves away on Wrexham's right, while Darren Ferguson, Sir Alex's son, potters about in midfield with his capable left foot. Doncaster threaten, fitfully.

With half an hour gone the Wrexham lads making all the noise at the back of the Kop start to do something strange: chant the names of other clubs: "The Watford!" they shout. "Sunderland, Sunderland, Sunderland!"

If you look carefully, you start to spot people, dotted among the crowd, wearing different club colours: Hull City, Stockport County, Grimsby Town, even Newcastle United, Manchester United, Chelsea. They spot a Gunners fan, and sing: "Arse-nal, Arse-nal, Arse-nal!", which reminds them of Wrexham's happiest moment, 13 years ago, in the FA Cup third round: "We beat the Arsenal 2-1. We beat the Arsenal 2-1."

Half-time, still 0-0. A stadium announcer calls on those fans of other clubs to come down on to the pitch. "Give them a hand," he urges, calling the names of some 60 clubs. "These people have come to help us!" A multi-coloured straggle of replica shirts makes its way round the pitch, and the crowd applauds warmly.

This is Fans United day, a grim, heartwarming ritual which has visited many stricken clubs since 1997, after Brighton and Hove Albion fans discovered their board had sold the ground and the club might go out of existence. An inspired, outraged Brighton supporter, Nic Outterside, organised Fans United, and started a website, www.clubsincrisis.com, where he documents the realities of English professional football beneath the Manchester United-Chelsea-Arsenal soap opera.

One of the most infamous landmarks in the long campaign by the big clubs to break away from sharing their money with the other clubs in the Football League was the reported comment by Manchester United's chief executive, Martin Edwards, in 1985. "The smaller clubs are bleeding the game dry," he said. "They should be put to sleep."

He and the other restless big club owners got their wish in 1992, when the First Division broke away to form the Premier League. Since then, satellite TV and other fortunes have poured into the top – Edwards personally made £87million from selling his United shares – and half the 72 clubs in the League's remaining three divisions have plunged into insolvency.

Solidarity in numbers…fans of various Premiership and Football League clubs parade in sympathy with Wrexham's plight at the game against Doncaster

The heaviest collapses were at clubs relegated from the money-soaked Premiership – Leicester, Ipswich, Derby, Bradford, Watford, QPR. Other famous names, Nottingham Forest and Sheffield Wednesday, also grappled with financial meltdown.

The Racecourse Ground is hosting Fans United because last December Wrexham became the 37th insolvent club, dropping into administration with debts of £2.5m. That does not begin to tell the full story, which encapsulates many of the various afflictions that have blighted clubs in recent times.

Wrexham's former chairman, Pryce Griffiths, a local businessman and lifelong fan, ran the club for years, selling players to try to balance the books, putting his own money in as loans to bale it out. He gave the manager, Brian Flynn, one last fling for promotion, signing players on extravagant wages – Ferguson's £200,000 a year being the most unaffordable. It didn't work, and Griffiths reached 2002 old, poorly and desperate for an exit.

Riding to the 'rescue' came Mark Guterman, a property developer and former chairman of local rivals Chester, whom he'd taken into administration in 2000. Guterman, a gifted talker, took his place in the directors' box as chairman, but it was only last spring that details of the deal came seeping out.

Guterman had had a partner, Alex Hamilton, another property developer and former Manchester solicitor. Hamilton, who wanted no publicity and no involvement with the football club, had supplied the money and saw Wrexham purely as a property deal. They shrewdly bought the Racecourse Ground's freehold from the brewery that owned it. In 1998, Griffiths had paid £750,000 for a 125-year lease; the brewery was receiving no rent so was happy to sell the freehold for just £300,000.

This meant Hamilton and Guterman could now develop the land around the ground, which Hamilton believes, with some justification, could be worth £20m. His plan was to demolish the football ground, replace it with a do-it-yourself superstore, build Wrexham a new stadium on the edge of town, pay off the club's debts and walk off with a mountain of profit. The fans might eventually have agreed to this had they known and been consulted, but the stealth left them terminally hostile.

In June 2003 Wrexham were facing a tax bill of £300,000; Hamilton, owner of both the club and the ground, agreed to pay it off in exchange for the surrender of the 125-year lease and the introduction of a new one. This provided just 12 months' tenure and required the club to pay annual rent of £30,000.

'We can hardly believe this is happening to us'

A Wrexham fan sums up their despair

Hamilton played his hand last summer. The local authority made it clear it wanted the Racecourse to remain, a more inspirational welcome to Wrexham than a DIY superstore. Rebuffed, Hamilton issued a notice to quit, giving the club one year to leave. The fans protested, but Hamilton insists if they want to keep their home, somebody will have to give him "a fat cheque" for the ground and club.

Hence the lads shouting themselves hoarse in the Kop, the poignancy of memories of the Arsenal victory, the Supporters' Trust rattling buckets outside the ground, a widespread football spectacle you don't see on *Match of the Day*. Hence the fans arriving from all over the country to show their sympathy.

Today's opponents, Doncaster, had a chairman, Ken Richardson, who in 1995 paid three men £10,000 to burn down the club's main stand in another dark tale of property development and, ultimately, administration. Theirs is an utterly notorious story.

In February 1999, Richardson was convicted of conspiracy and jailed for four years. Doncaster were relegated out of the League that May, but regrouped and returned, gaining promotion back from the Conference in 2003, winning what is now League Two last season. Here, they look solid, useful, their fans roaring passion and solidarity.

The match finishes 0-0 and Wrexham fans go home cheered. One tells me: "I was ignorant before. I even laughed when I heard about Doncaster and all those other clubs in trouble. I'm ashamed of that now. We can hardly believe this is happening and we're so grateful to these fans for coming all this way to show their support."

The recent, divided, scandal-strewn period of English football has unearthed a profound truth: fans really care about their clubs. Once they understand, they care about other clubs, too. All too often, however, the men who have come to own them do not care very much at all.

David Conn's book, The Beautiful Game? Searching For The Soul of Football, *is published by Yellow Jersey Press, priced £12.*

Walk before you can run

The quality of women's football needs to improve dramatically before people will part with cash to watch it, says Howard Johnson

Women to the fore...Arsenal captain Faye White and Jayne Ludlow lift the Cup

THE NEWS THAT Manchester United have decided to axe their women's team at the end of the season may have come as a blow to all those who love women's football, but it won't be the talk of pubs and clubs up and down the country.

Most English football fans couldn't care less about the women's game. And unless there is some radical rethinking about how the sport is marketed and presented to the public, most likely they never will.

Last season's Women's FA Cup Final between Arsenal and Charlton was given the highest media profile the women's game in this country has ever seen. The BBC supported the event with both commentary on Radio 5 Live and TV coverage, hyping the game with extraordinarily evangelical zeal, as if the organisation was an absolute dead loss, an interminable bore.

No matter how you try to sugar-coat it, no matter how much the media might want to support UK women's football, presumably in some misguided attempt to promote some sort of footballing sexual equality, the bottom line is that you'd have to be mad to part with your money to watch such dross.

Now before anyone gets up a head of steam about my obviously sexist attitude to all this, let me make a few things clear.

I have nothing whatsoever against women playing the game. If someone gets pleasure out of playing football, then only an idiot would deny them the right to play. Likewise, if the FA is looking to invest in, encourage and develop female

'You'd have to be mad to pay to watch such dross'

somehow felt duty bound to back the whole idea of women's football.

So, given the level of support and fanfare from a supposedly trusted establishment, I believed we were in for a treat.

We were sold a pup. The match was execrable, the skill levels astonishingly poor, the pace of the game leaden, the entertainment factor zero. As a spectator event it

interest in participating in the sport, then all well and good.

But if people start hyping women's football through some misguided sense that it's the right thing to do, those zealots are going to do more to destroy the women's game than any amount of intransigent, cynical, beer-swilling blokes plonked in front of Sky at four o'clock on a Sunday afternoon ever could.

Football Association vice-chairman Ray Kiddell, head of the FA women's football committee, was quite a revelation when he commented on United's decision to pull the plug on their women's team. "The progress of women's football can be really helped by professional clubs taking women's teams under their umbrella," he said in the depths of his depression.

But why should professional clubs give two hoots about women's football unless there's a commercial incentive for doing so? Let's not kid ourselves – Manchester United, Chelsea, Arsenal and all the rest of them don't invest millions in youth development because they think it benefits the game. They do it because they think it benefits them. Unless they can see a commercial reason for supporting women's teams, they won't do so.

Luckily for Kiddell, it seems Arsenal and Charlton do believe in a commercial future for the women's game – and they may well be right. The United States has offered a glimpse into what might eventually be there to tap into. But even there, there have been huge problems – witness the collapse last year of the women's professional league.

It is, of course, not the English women players' fault that they're so awful to watch. Surely the onus lies with the FA, one of whose roles should be to act as guardian of the game for the future. It's down to them, not the clubs, to invest in women's football, to nurture it properly – and that means away from the spotlight – until it can truly hold its head up and confidently claim it's a viable commercial sport. Upping its public profile when it's not yet ready will serve only to seriously damage the cause of women's football.

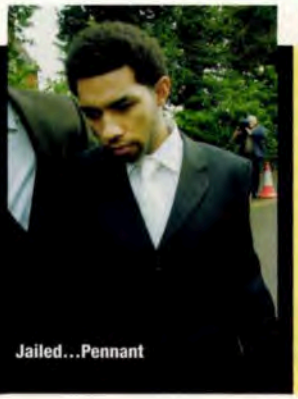
Does it devalue the achievements of the players themselves if they have to go about their business without massive media exposure? No, not if you believe that blokes who turn up on a Sunday and huff and puff their way around the local park also have a place in football.

Dressing women's football mutton as lamb does nobody any favours. Why can't the powers that be learn one of life's most basic lessons – that you have to walk before you can run?

IT'S ALL GONE WRONG FOR...

JERMAINE PENNANT

It's been over six years now since Arsenal paid Notts County £2million for wonderkid Pennant, the player they said was going to rewrite the talent rulebook. Now he's on his way out of Highbury and into prison, sent there for three months by a judge who was unsympathetic to calls for leniency after the 22-year-old admitted drink-driving while already banned. Birmingham, Pennant's current loan club, insist they'll be standing by the errant striker, and there is still time for him to turn his life around. But right now, as an object lesson in how to throw it all away, this fella takes some beating.


Jailed...Pennant

Top of his game...Keane

MEDIA WATCH

Arsenal's all-foreign line-up

"From Arsenal's team-sheet to the demise of the national sport is too great a leap to make. But it cannot be good for the England team if the champions are playing without a single Englishman in the side."
Mark Fleming makes his point succinctly in *The Daily Express*

Spot the Briton...Arsenal have been criticised for fielding a team composed entirely of foreign players

"Let's be clear that Wenger's squad last Monday would not have been exclusively foreign if Sol Campbell and Ashley Cole had been available to him. Whatever else it is, Wenger's selection policy is not anti-English on principle. Indeed, Wenger's Arsenal provides Sven Goran Eriksson, the national coach, with two of his automatic first-team selections. It's hard to think how much more supportive a club manager could be to the national cause. If every other Premiership side fulfilled their quota to England in this measure, Eriksson would be deeper in riches than he ever imagined he could be."
Giles Smith opts not to get hysterical in *The Times*

"Arsene Wenger has a job to do, so I don't want to be critical of him. But this is a worrying pattern for English football. Are our stars of the future getting the opportunities they need? What worries me even more, though, is the attitude of [Arsenal vice-chairman] David Dein. Here is a man, a prominent member of the FA's international committee, openly lobbying against UEFA's quota proposals."
Professional Footballers' Association boss Gordon Taylor tells news agency AFP of his concerns

"In the space of 16 years, Arsenal have transformed from being the last club to win the English League without using a single foreigner in the whole season (in 1988-89) to becoming the first club to use an entire matchday squad comprised of non-British players. But the Gunners have been among the leaders in the import business since the early 1990s, when the likes of Anders Limpar and John Jensen arrived as part of a Scandinavian influx. They have also blooded a number of notable foreign 'firsts', including the first Dutchman in the League (Gerry Keizer, in 1930), the first Icelander (Albert Gudmundsson, 1946), the first player born in Senegal (Frenchman Patrick Vieira, 1996), and the first Liberian (Christopher Wreh, 1997)."
The Independent's Nick Harris says Arsenal have long had an active foreign policy

"Some of the criticism has been unfair. They're saying Arsene's not interested in English players. Well, I'm on my way to see lots of games where there will be over 100 English boys taking part in Arsenal teams ranging from the age of nine to 14."
Ex-Arsenal star Liam Brady defends Wenger on *www.itv.com*

"Arsenal have a very good youth policy, but it's a worldwide policy. They have some great kids, but most of them are foreigners. And if your up-and-coming kids are foreign as well, it doesn't look good for England or UK players. It could get to the stage where Sven Goran Eriksson is struggling to find a game to watch."
Glenn Moore opts for hyperbole in *The Independent*

"As a foreign manager I feel responsible for the English national team, the English players and the homegrown players. So I would never forget my responsibilities to the future of young players. We have a good number of English players at the club and in a couple of years we will be able to answer the demands of FIFA regulations. When the national team is announced, we always have a minimum of three or four players involved. Arsenal have been successful with a lot of foreign players, but I feel responsible to this country."
Chelsea manager Jose Mourinho surprises no one by chucking in his twopenn'orth in *The Daily Mail*

"My priority is always Arsenal, but I feel a responsibility to English football as well and if I can produce 10 English players then I'm happy. But I'm not a magician. I bought Francis Jeffers, but sold him because he didn't make it. I signed Richard Wright, but he didn't make it. When world-class players are in front of you it's hard to get them out of the team."
Wenger offers home truths in *The Mirror*

IT'S ALL GONE RIGHT FOR...

ROY KEANE

Last season they were saying he was a shadow of his former self, his pace had deserted him and he was only setting himself up for a long, slow, painful fall from grace by sticking it out at Manchester United. All those knee operations had taken their toll and he would never again be the force that had mercilessly driven Sir Alex Ferguson's team to countless trophies. 'They', of course, are the same pundits who now claim Keane has matured like a fine wine, is in the form of his life and could carry on for another five years at the very top. Not only that, but Keano had all charges against him dropped over an alleged assault on a 16-year-old. The teenager's motive in bringing the charges was described by the judge as "very questionable".

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TALENT SCOUT
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Maximiliano LOPEZ

Argentinian youngster walking tall at Barca

A YOUNG MARADONA may have strutted his stuff at Camp Nou in the early 1980s, but ever since then Barcelona's stadium has proved a tricky venue to crack for promising Argentinian acts. Just ask Javier Saviola and Juan Roman Riquelme.

But it took 20-year-old Maximiliano 'Maxi' Lopez all of three minutes on his Champions League debut to announce his arrival to the Catalan fans. The young Argentinian scored the equaliser in the home first leg against Chelsea just shortly after coming off the bench and capped a headline-stealing performance with the assist – albeit a miscued shot – for Samuel Eto'o's winner.

When Barca embarked on a search to replace the injured Henrik Larsson, it was thought they would swap like for like and opt for experience, with old heads such as Gabriel Batistuta and Marcelo Salas being mooted. So when Lopez, a £4.2million signing from River Plate, was unveiled in January there was widespread surprise.

Not least at Benfica. So confident was everyone in Portugal that Lopez was set for the Stadium of Light that a delegation of football hacks travelled to River's Mendoza training camp expecting the youngster to hold court, and his face was plastered on the front covers of a number of sports magazines.

"You should have seen their faces when I said I knew nothing about Benfica," recalls Lopez. "A lot of things were said and written in recent months. I tried to steer clear of all the gossip. If I'd paid attention to everything being said about me I'd have gone mad."

And since arriving at Barca, Lopez confesses he sometimes struggles to stay cool. "Everything is so different. The ground, the press, the supporters. Sometimes I think I am dreaming."

The forward has said he would relish the chance to link up with fellow River Plate old boy Saviola, now on loan at Monaco but still a Barca player. "Like a lot of people in Argentina, I really don't understand what happened with Saviola. He's still very young and has already scored more than 100 goals in his career. He scores for all the teams he plays for. I'm sure he can for Barca if he gets another chance."

Lopez lacks Saviola's speed or guile, but at 1.88m tall he certainly does not lack physical presence. And he believes this will help him make his mark. "In Spain the tempo is faster and the games are a lot more physical," he says. "I'm discovering that you need to be very strong. Obviously, you need to be strong in Argentina, too, but you get more time with the ball at your feet. Here, you need to make decisions faster. But I think I have the right kind of game for European football – and I guess Barcelona must have thought so too. I am tall and good in the air, but I am also very mobile and like to play across the whole of the front line."

Dan Brennan

FACT FILE

Club Barcelona (Spa)
Country Argentina
Born April 3, 1984, in Capital Federal
Previous club River Plate
Honours Argentinian closing championship 2002, 2003, 2004

Mauricio PINILLA

Chilean wild child facing his biggest test

WITH FOUR RELATIVELY straightforward home games ahead of them, Chile are confident of making it to the World Cup. But where will the goals come from? They currently have the worst attacking record in the South American qualifiers; Marcelo Salas, struggling for so long for form and fitness, has not scored for his country since August 2001; and Reinaldo Navia is injured.

Chile, then, badly need to get their loose cannon firing in the right direction, because it seems that the key man will be Mauricio Pinilla.

The brief career of Chile's wild child was aptly summarised by events during February's friendly against Ecuador. Pinilla, originally left out of the squad, fumed that his exclusion was "totally unfair", and hinted that he might refuse to answer future call-ups. Coach Juvenal Olmos wisely relented. He was unveiling a new creative balance to his midfield and needed to see how it would click with his most explosive striker.

Pinilla appeared at half-time, added potency to the attack and fired home his fourth international goal in the 3-0 win.

The combination of talent and tantrums has become Pinilla's trademark. The former took him to Internazionale from Universidad de Chile after Pinilla came under the wing of former Chile and Inter striker Ivan Zamorano; the latter have hindered his adaptation to European football, where so far he has kept gossip columnists busier than opposing goalkeepers.

The Zamorano connection was instrumental in the move to Inter, who immediately loaned him out to Chievo, and then on to Celta Vigo. Pinilla is now with Sporting Lisbon in Portugal, his third European country at the age of just 21, and frustration at a lack of first-team opportunities could well mean the forward will be on the move once more at the end of the season.

While Pinilla may have plenty to prove in Europe, the same is not true at international level. His goals in the World Cup qualifiers to date – a towering header at home to Peru and an inspired volley away to Venezuela – were both decisive in narrow victories. In addition, his superb turn and burst set up Navia's equaliser away to Argentina, his run and cross supplied Mark Gonzalez with the chance with which he sealed victory in Bolivia, and his back-to-goal strength gave Rodrigo Melendez the platform for his strike against Uruguay.

Pinilla, then, has played a part in half of Chile's 10 goals in the campaign. In so doing he has shown the all-round attributes of his game – power, pace, balance, aerial ability, right-footed finishing and the confidence to try his tricks.

"Nobody tells me what to do, and what I get up to off the pitch is my business," he says. "If I'm playing well, as I believe I have for Chile, then I'm doing my job."

This year, with World Cup qualification at stake, his job description is much more demanding.

Tim Vickery

FACT FILE

Club Sporting Lisbon (Por)
Country Chile
Born February 4, 1984, in Santiago
Previous clubs Universidad de Chile, Internazionale (Ita), Chievo (Ita), Celta Vigo (Spa)
International debut March 2003, v Peru
International caps 14 (4 goals)

Silvio PROTO

Belgian keeper tipped for move into the big time

LA LOUVIERE'S Silvio Proto became Belgium's youngest goalkeeping debutant for more than two decades when appearing aged 21 in the 2-0 World Cup qualifying defeat by Serbia & Montenegro in Brussels last November.

National coach Aime Anthuenis did not need to ponder long before selecting Proto, and it is easy to understand why. Since making his club debut four years ago, he has improved season by season and this term there has been no more accomplished keeper in Belgium.

La Louviere's French coach Albert Cartier says: "His concentration levels have been excellent, athletically he's very impressive and he has that great knack of pulling off saves when the forward is favourite to score."

Needless to say, Proto is destined for a more prestigious address. Manchester United and Arsenal are rumoured to have watched him several times, Paris Saint-Germain may make a bid, while he could also move to Italy, land of his forefathers, with Palermo, Roma, Siena and Fiorentina all in the frame.

But Proto is cautious. "I don't want to find myself third-choice at a major foreign team; I'd rather join one of the big clubs in Belgium," he says. "I just hope they don't think I'm too expensive." They ought not to. La Louviere want only £2million.

Nick Bidwell

FACT FILE

- **Club** La Louviere
- **Country** Belgium
- **Born** May 23, 1983, in Charleroi
- **Previous clubs** RACS Couillet, Olympic Charleroi
- **International debut** November 2004, v Serbia & Montenegro
- **International caps** 2

Eduardo DA SILVA

Rio-born striker making waves in Croatia

WHEN THE NEWS broke last year that Dinamo Zagreb's Brazil-born attacker Eduardo Da Silva had been granted Croat citizenship and was making himself available to the national team, there were dissenting voices in this proud, young nation.

The Croat federation stood firm, however, clearly relishing the prospect of having the youngster at their disposal. During his four years in the Croat League, Da Silva – or 'Dudu' as he prefers to be known – has proved himself an exciting talent, tricky on the ball, pacy and just as effective through the middle as on either flank.

And how he has grabbed his opportunity, excelling for the Croat Under-21s and winning his first full cap last November in a 1-0 friendly defeat by the Republic of Ireland.

Da Silva, who grew up in Rio de Janeiro's *favelas*, the hillside shanty towns, signed for local Second Division side Bangu at 16. However, within a year he was snapped up by Dinamo for just £30,000 after they had seen a video of him in action.

His form in the reserves was decidedly average, though, and it was only after being loaned to Second Division Inter Zapresic in late 2002 that he began to flourish. Ten goals in 15 games helped Inter to promotion, and Dinamo could not wait to bring him back.

"It was tough to make it in Croatia," says Da Silva, who is being tracked by Ajax, Anderlecht and PSV Eindhoven. "But I'm glad I persevered. This country is in my heart."

Nick Bidwell

FACT FILE

- **Club** Dinamo Zagreb
- **Country** Croatia
- **Born** February 25, 1983, in Rio de Janeiro
- **Previous clubs** Nova Kennedy, Bangu
- **International debut** November 2004, v Republic of Ireland
- **International caps** 2 (0 goals)
- **Honours** Croat Cup 2004

MAXWELL

Ajax starlet on shopping list of Europe's richest clubs

WITH HIS AJAX contract due to run out in little more than a year, much-vaunted Brazilian left-back or wing-back Maxwell is a target for many of Europe's elite clubs. Real Madrid are said to see him as the successor to Roberto Carlos, a number of Premiership high-rollers are interested, while representatives of Italian heavyweights Juventus, Milan and Internazionale have been busy preparing the ground.

Whoever does secure his services will be sure of value for money. For just £8.5million – a sell-on figure written into his current contract – they will have a multi-purpose talent of the highest order. Maxwell won both Dutch Player of the Year awards (press and professionals) last season and was deservedly called up to the Brazil squad for the first time last October for World Cup qualifiers against Venezuela and Colombia, though he did not play.

First and foremost, Maxwell is a wonderful attacking weapon. A fast and elegant runner with the ball, he glides past would-be tacklers and can usually be relied upon to deliver good crosses. And as he proved in a recent UEFA Cup tie against Auxerre, he can strike a long shot with the best.

Born in the South Atlantic resort of Vila Velha, Parana, Maxwell – full name Maxwell Scherrer Cabelino Andrade – was a regular in the Cruzeiro youth team that took part in a tournament in Holland. Ajax were watching and though he had yet to play first-team football, the Amsterdam club had no hesitation paying £2m for him.

He would not take long to taste success, establishing himself in the Ajax side that did the Double in 2001-02. But mixed in with success that season was personal tragedy, with the news that his younger brother had died back home.

"I hope you become the next Roberto Carlos," said players' union vice-chairman Marc Van Hintum when giving Maxwell the Player of the Year trophy. Some would argue he already is.

Nick Bidwell

FACT FILE

Club	Ajax (Hol)
Country	Brazil
Born	August 27, 1981, in Vila Velha
Previous club	Cruzeiro
Honours	Dutch League 2002, 2004; Dutch Cup 2002

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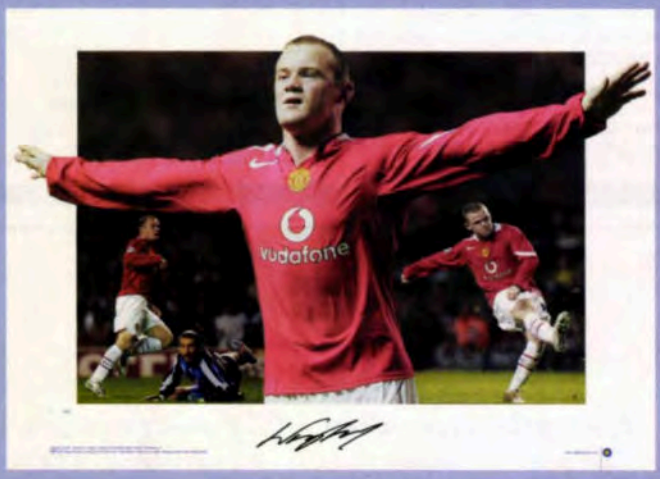

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Zambia	5	3	1	1	6	4	10
Senegal	5	3	1	1	9	5	10
Congo	5	2	0	3	6	7	6
Liberia	5	1	1	3	1	7	4
Mali	5	0	2	3	3	6	2

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05.06.04 Zambia-Togo ... 1-0
06.06.04 Liberia-Mali ... 1-0
19.06.04 Mali-Zambia ... 1-1
20.06.04 Congo-Liberia ... 3-0
20.06.04 Togo-Senegal ... 3-1
03.07.04 Senegal-Zambia ... 1-0
04.07.04 Congo-Mali ... 1-0
04.07.04 Liberia-Togo ... 0-0
04.09.04 Zambia-Liberia ... 1-0
05.09.04 Mali-Senegal ... 2-2
05.09.04 Togo-Congo ... 2-0
10.10.04 Congo-Zambia ... 2-3
10.10.04 Liberia-Senegal ... 0-3
10.10.04 Togo-Mali ... 1-0
26.03.05 Senegal-Liberia
26.03.05 Zambia-Congo
27.03.05 Mali-Togo
03.06.05 Congo-Senegal
03.06.05 Mali-Liberia
03.06.05 Togo-Zambia
17.06.05 Liberia-Congo
17.06.05 Senegal-Togo
17.06.05 Zambia-Mali
02.09.05 Mali-Congo
02.09.05 Togo-Liberia
02.09.05 Zambia-Senegal
07.10.05 Congo-Togo
07.10.05 Liberia-Zambia
07.10.05 Senegal-Mali

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	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
South Africa	5	3	0	2	5	5	9
Ghana	5	2	2	1	6	2	8
DR Congo	5	2	2	1	5	4	8
Cape Verde Is	5	2	1	2	4	5	7
Burkina Faso	5	2	0	3	5	6	6
Uganda	5	1	1	3	2	5	4

05.06.04 Burkina Faso-Ghana ... 1-0
05.06.04 South Africa-Cape Verde Is ... 2-1
05.06.04 Uganda-DR Congo ... 1-0
19.06.04 Cape Verde Is-Uganda ... 1-0
20.06.04 DR Congo-Burkina Faso ... 3-2
20.06.04 Ghana-South Africa ... 3-0
03.07.04 Cape Verde Is-DR Congo ... 1-1
03.07.04 South Africa-Burkina Faso ... 2-0
03.07.04 Uganda-Ghana ... 1-1
04.09.04 Burkina Faso-Uganda ... 2-0
05.09.04 DR Congo-South Africa ... 1-0
05.09.04 Ghana-Cape Verde Is ... 2-0
09.10.04 Cape Verde Is-Burkina Faso ... 1-0
10.10.04 Ghana-DR Congo ... 0-0
10.10.04 Uganda-South Africa ... 0-1
26.03.05 Burkina Faso-Cape Verde Is
26.03.05 South Africa-Uganda
27.03.05 DR Congo-Ghana
03.06.05 Cape Verde Is-South Africa
03.06.05 DR Congo-Uganda
03.06.05 Ghana-Burkina Faso
17.06.05 Burkina Faso-DR Congo
17.06.05 South Africa-Ghana
17.06.05 Uganda-Cape Verde Is
02.09.05 Burkina Faso-South Africa
02.09.05 DR Congo-Cape Verde Is
02.09.05 Ghana-Uganda
07.10.05 Cape Verde Is-Ghana
07.10.05 South Africa-DR Congo
07.10.05 Uganda-Burkina Faso

Group 3

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Ivory Coast	5	4	0	1	10	3	12
Libya	5	3	1	1	7	4	10
Cameroon	5	2	2	1	7	5	8
Egypt	5	2	1	2	11	9	7
Benin	5	0	2	3	6	11	2
Sudan	5	0	2	3	2	11	2

06.06.04 Cameroon-Benin ... 2-1
06.06.04 Ivory Coast-Libya ... 2-0
06.06.04 Sudan-Egypt ... 0-3
18.06.04 Libya-Cameroon ... 0-0
20.06.04 Benin-Sudan ... 1-1
20.06.04 Egypt-Ivory Coast ... 1-2
03.07.04 Sudan-Libya ... 0-1
04.07.04 Benin-Egypt ... 3-3
04.07.04 Cameroon-Ivory Coast ... 2-0
03.09.04 Libya-Benin ... 4-1
05.09.04 Egypt-Cameroon ... 3-2
05.09.04 Ivory Coast-Sudan ... 5-0
08.10.04 Libya-Egypt ... 2-1
09.10.04 Sudan-Cameroon ... 1-1
10.10.04 Benin-Ivory Coast ... 0-1
27.03.05 Cameroon-Sudan
27.03.05 Egypt-Libya
27.03.05 Ivory Coast-Benin
03.06.05 Benin-Cameroon
03.06.05 Egypt-Sudan
03.06.05 Libya-Ivory Coast
17.06.05 Cameroon-Libya
17.06.05 Ivory Coast-Egypt
17.06.05 Sudan-Benin
02.09.05 Egypt-Benin
02.09.05 Ivory Coast-Cameroon
02.09.05 Libya-Sudan
07.10.05 Benin-Libya
07.10.05 Cameroon-Egypt
07.10.05 Sudan-Ivory Coast

Group 4

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Angola	5	3	2	0	5	2	11
Nigeria	5	3	1	1	7	2	10
Gabon	5	1	3	1	8	7	6
Zimbabwe	5	1	2	2	4	6	5
Rwanda	5	1	1	3	4	7	4
Algeria	5	0	3	2	2	6	3

05.06.04 Algeria-Angola ... 0-0
05.06.04 Gabon-Zimbabwe ... 1-1
05.06.04 Nigeria-Rwanda ... 2-0
19.06.04 Rwanda-Gabon ... 3-1
20.06.04 Angola-Nigeria ... 1-0
20.06.04 Zimbabwe-Algeria ... 1-1
03.07.04 Gabon-Angola ... 2-2
03.07.04 Nigeria-Algeria ... 1-0
03.07.04 Rwanda-Zimbabwe ... 0-2
03.09.04 Zimbabwe-Nigeria ... 0-3
05.09.04 Algeria-Gabon ... 0-3
05.09.04 Angola-Rwanda ... 1-0
09.10.04 Gabon-Nigeria ... 1-1
09.10.04 Rwanda-Algeria ... 1-1
10.10.04 Angola-Zimbabwe ... 1-0
26.03.05 Nigeria-Gabon
27.03.05 Algeria-Rwanda
27.03.05 Zimbabwe-Angola
03.06.05 Angola-Algeria
03.06.05 Rwanda-Nigeria
03.06.05 Zimbabwe-Gabon
17.06.05 Algeria-Zimbabwe
17.06.05 Gabon-Rwanda
17.06.05 Nigeria-Angola
02.09.05 Algeria-Nigeria
02.09.05 Angola-Gabon
02.09.05 Zimbabwe-Rwanda
07.10.05 Gabon-Algeria
07.10.05 Nigeria-Zimbabwe
07.10.05 Rwanda-Angola

Group 5

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Morocco	5	2	3	0	9	4	9
Guinea	5	2	2	1	9	5	8
Botswana	5	2	0	3	5	10	6
Kenya	4	2	0	2	7	10	6
Tunisia	4	1	2	1	8	6	5
Malawi	5	0	3	2	6	9	3

05.06.04 Malawi-Morocco ... 1-1
05.06.04 Tunisia-Botswana ... 4-1
19.06.04 Botswana-Malawi ... 2-0
20.06.04 Guinea-Tunisia ... 2-1
03.07.04 Botswana-Morocco ... 0-1
03.07.04 Malawi-Guinea ... 1-1
04.09.04 Kenya-Malawi ... 3-2
04.09.04 Morocco-Tunisia ... 1-1
05.09.04 Guinea-Botswana ... 4-0
09.10.04 Botswana-Kenya ... 2-1
09.10.04 Malawi-Tunisia ... 2-2
10.10.04 Guinea-Morocco ... 1-1
17.11.04 Kenya-Guinea ... 2-1
09.02.05 Morocco-Kenya ... 5-1
26.03.05 Kenya-Botswana
26.03.05 Morocco-Guinea
26.03.05 Tunisia-Malawi
03.06.05 Morocco-Malawi
03.06.05 Botswana-Tunisia
03.06.05 Guinea-Kenya
11.06.05 Tunisia-Guinea
17.06.05 Kenya-Morocco
17.06.05 Malawi-Botswana
17.08.05 Tunisia-Kenya
02.09.05 Kenya-Tunisia
02.09.05 Morocco-Botswana
02.09.05 Guinea-Malawi
07.10.05 Malawi-Kenya
07.10.05 Tunisia-Morocco
07.10.05 Botswana-Guinea

Group winners qualify for finals

ASIA

4.5 finals berths

2nd stage

Group A

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
South Korea	1	1	0	0	2	0	3
Saudi Arabia	1	0	1	0	1	1	1
Uzbekistan	1	0	1	0	1	1	1
Kuwait	1	0	0	1	0	2	0

09.02.05 South Korea-Kuwait ... 2-0
09.02.05 Uzbekistan-Saudi Arabia ... 1-1
25.03.05 Kuwait-Uzbekistan
25.03.05 Saudi Arabia-South Korea
30.03.05 Kuwait-Saudi Arabia
30.03.05 South Korea-Uzbekistan
03.06.05 Saudi Arabia-Kuwait
03.06.05 Uzbekistan-South Korea
08.06.05 Kuwait-South Korea
08.06.05 Saudi Arabia-Uzbekistan
17.08.05 South Korea-Saudi Arabia
17.08.05 Uzbekistan-Kuwait

Group B

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Japan	1	1	0	0	2	1	3
Bahrain	1	0	1	0	0	0	1
Iran	1	0	1	0	0	0	1
North Korea	1	0	0	1	1	2	0

09.02.05 Bahrain-Iran ... 0-0
09.02.05 Japan-North Korea ... 2-1
25.03.05 Iran-Japan
25.03.05 North Korea-Bahrain
30.03.05 Japan-Bahrain
30.03.05 North Korea-Iran
03.06.05 Iran-North Korea
03.06.05 Bahrain-Japan
08.06.05 Iran-Bahrain
08.06.05 North Korea-Japan
17.08.05 Bahrain-North Korea
17.08.05 Japan-Iran

Group winners and runners-up qualify for finals. The two third-placed teams meet in a two-leg play-off, the winners of which meet the fourth-placed CONCACAF team over two legs for a place in finals

Asian play-off matchdays:
Sep 3 (1st leg), Oct 8 (2nd leg), 2005

CONCACAF

3.5 finals berths

3rd stage

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Mexico	1	1	0	0	2	1	3
United States	1	1	0	0	2	1	3
Guatemala	1	0	1	0	0	0	1
Panama	1	0	1	0	0	0	1
Costa Rica	1	0	0	1	1	2	0
Trinidad & Tob	1	0	0	1	1	2	0

09.02.05 Costa Rica-Mexico ... 1-2
09.02.05 Panama-Guatemala ... 0-0
09.02.05 Trinidad & Tob-United States ... 1-2
26.03.05 Costa Rica-Panama
26.03.05 Guatemala-Trinidad & Tobago
27.03.05 Mexico-United States
30.03.05 Panama-Mexico
30.03.05 Trinidad & Tobago-Costa Rica
30.03.05 United States-Guatemala
04.06.05 Guatemala-Mexico
04.06.05 Trinidad & Tobago-Panama
04.06.05 United States-Costa Rica
08.06.05 Costa Rica-Guatemala
08.06.05 Mexico-Trinidad & Tobago
08.06.05 Panama-United States
17.08.05 Guatemala-Panama
17.08.05 Mexico-Costa Rica
17.08.05 United States-Trinidad & Tobago
03.09.05 Panama-Costa Rica
03.09.05 Trinidad & Tobago-Guatemala
03.09.05 United States-Mexico
07.09.05 Costa Rica-Trinidad & Tobago
07.09.05 Guatemala-United States
07.09.05 Mexico-Panama
08/09.10.05 Costa Rica-United States
08/09.10.05 Mexico-Guatemala
08/09.10.05 Panama-Trinidad & Tobago
12.10.05 Guatemala-Costa Rica
12.10.05 Trinidad & Tobago-Mexico
12.10.05 United States-Panama

Top three qualify for finals. The fourth-placed team meet the winners of the Asian play-off over two legs for a place in finals

EUROPE

14 finals berths (including hosts Germany, who qualify automatically)

Group 1

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Holland	4	3	1	0	10	3	10
Romania	5	3	1	1	10	5	10
Finland	5	3	0	2	10	6	9
Czech Republic	4	3	0	1	6	2	9
Macedonia	6	1	2	3	6	7	5
Andorra	5	1	1	3	2	11	4
Armenia	5	0	1	4	2	12	1

18.08.04 Macedonia-Armenia ... 3-0
18.08.04 Romania-Finland ... 2-1
04.09.04 Finland-Andorra ... 3-0
04.09.04 Romania-Macedonia ... 2-1
08.09.04 Andorra-Romania ... 1-5
08.09.04 Armenia-Finland ... 0-2
08.09.04 Holland-Czech Republic ... 2-0
09.10.04 Czech Republic-Romania ... 1-0
09.10.04 Finland-Armenia ... 3-1

09.10.04 Macedonia-Holland 2-2
13.10.04 Andorra-Macedonia 1-0
13.10.04 Armenia-Czech Republic 0-3
13.10.04 Holland-Finland 3-1
17.11.04 Andorra-Holland 0-3
17.11.04 Armenia-Romania 1-1
17.11.04 Macedonia-Czech Republic 0-2
09.02.05 Macedonia-Andorra 0-0
26.03.05 Armenia-Andorra
26.03.05 Czech Republic-Finland
26.03.05 Romania-Holland
30.03.05 Andorra-Czech Republic
30.03.05 Holland-Armenia
30.03.05 Macedonia-Romania
04.06.05 Armenia-Macedonia
04.06.05 Czech Republic-Andorra
04.06.05 Holland-Romania
08.06.05 Czech Republic-Macedonia
08.06.05 Finland-Holland
08.06.05 Romania-Armenia
17.08.05 Macedonia-Finland
17.08.05 Romania-Andorra
03.09.05 Andorra-Finland
03.09.05 Armenia-Holland
03.09.05 Romania-Czech Republic
07.09.05 Czech Republic-Armenia
07.09.05 Finland-Macedonia
07.09.05 Holland-Andorra
08.10.05 Czech Republic-Holland
08.10.05 Finland-Romania
12.10.05 Andorra-Armenia
12.10.05 Finland-Czech Republic
12.10.05 Holland-Macedonia

Group 2

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Ukraine	6	4	2	0	11	3	14
Greece	5	2	2	1	7	5	8
Denmark	5	1	3	1	7	6	6
Turkey	5	1	3	1	6	5	6
Albania	5	2	0	3	3	7	6
Georgia	4	1	2	1	5	5	5
Kazakhstan	4	0	0	4	2	10	0

04.09.04 Albania-Greece 2-1
04.09.04 Denmark-Ukraine 1-1
04.09.04 Turkey-Georgia 1-1
08.09.04 Georgia-Albania 2-0
08.09.04 Greece-Turkey 0-0
08.09.04 Kazakhstan-Ukraine 1-2
09.10.04 Albania-Denmark 0-2
09.10.04 Turkey-Kazakhstan 4-0
09.10.04 Ukraine-Greece 1-1
13.10.04 Denmark-Turkey 1-1
13.10.04 Kazakhstan-Albania 0-1
13.10.04 Ukraine-Georgia 2-0
17.11.04 Georgia-Denmark 2-2
17.11.04 Greece-Kazakhstan 3-1
17.11.04 Turkey-Ukraine 0-3
09.02.05 Albania-Ukraine 0-2
09.02.05 Greece-Denmark 2-1
26.03.05 Denmark-Kazakhstan
26.03.05 Georgia-Greece
26.03.05 Turkey-Albania
30.03.05 Georgia-Turkey
30.03.05 Greece-Albania
30.03.05 Ukraine-Denmark
04.06.05 Albania-Georgia
04.06.05 Turkey-Greece
04.06.05 Ukraine-Kazakhstan
08.06.05 Denmark-Albania
08.06.05 Greece-Ukraine
08.06.05 Kazakhstan-Turkey
17.08.05 Kazakhstan-Georgia
03.09.05 Albania-Kazakhstan
03.09.05 Georgia-Ukraine
03.09.05 Turkey-Denmark
07.09.05 Denmark-Georgia
07.09.05 Kazakhstan-Greece
07.09.05 Ukraine-Turkey
08.10.05 Denmark-Greece
08.10.05 Georgia-Kazakhstan
08.10.05 Ukraine-Albania
12.10.05 Albania-Turkey
12.10.05 Greece-Georgia
12.10.05 Kazakhstan-Denmark

Group 3

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Portugal	5	4	1	0	20	3	13
Slovakia	4	3	1	0	15	3	10
Russia	4	2	1	1	10	8	7
Latvia	5	2	1	2	10	12	7
Estonia	5	2	1	2	8	11	7
Liechtenstein	5	1	1	3	8	14	4
Luxembourg	6	0	0	6	4	24	0

18.08.04 Liechtenstein-Estonia 1-2
18.08.04 Slovakia-Luxembourg 3-1
04.09.04 Estonia-Luxembourg 4-0
04.09.04 Latvia-Portugal 0-2
04.09.04 Russia-Slovakia 1-1
08.09.04 Luxembourg-Latvia 3-4
08.09.04 Portugal-Estonia 4-0
08.09.04 Slovakia-Liechtenstein 7-0
09.10.04 Liechtenstein-Portugal 2-2
09.10.04 Luxembourg-Russia 0-4
09.10.04 Slovakia-Latvia 4-1
13.10.04 Latvia-Estonia 2-2
13.10.04 Luxembourg-Liechtenstein 0-4
13.10.04 Portugal-Russia 7-1
17.11.04 Liechtenstein-Latvia 1-3
17.11.04 Luxembourg-Portugal 0-5
17.11.04 Russia-Estonia 4-0
26.03.05 Estonia-Slovakia
26.03.05 Liechtenstein-Russia
30.03.05 Estonia-Russia
30.03.05 Latvia-Luxembourg
30.03.05 Slovakia-Portugal
04.06.05 Estonia-Liechtenstein
04.06.05 Portugal-Slovakia
04.06.05 Russia-Latvia
08.06.05 Estonia-Portugal
08.06.05 Latvia-Liechtenstein
08.06.05 Luxembourg-Slovakia
17.08.05 Latvia-Russia
17.08.05 Liechtenstein-Slovakia
03.09.05 Estonia-Latvia
03.09.05 Portugal-Luxembourg
03.09.05 Russia-Liechtenstein
07.09.05 Latvia-Slovakia
07.09.05 Liechtenstein-Luxembourg
07.09.05 Russia-Portugal
08.10.05 Portugal-Liechtenstein
08.10.05 Russia-Luxembourg
08.10.05 Slovakia-Estonia
12.10.05 Luxembourg-Estonia
12.10.05 Portugal-Latvia
12.10.05 Slovakia-Russia

Group 4

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
France	4	2	2	0	4	0	8
Rep Ireland	4	2	2	0	6	1	8
Israel	4	2	2	0	6	4	8
Switzerland	3	1	2	0	9	3	5
Faroe Islands	4	0	1	3	2	12	1
Cyprus	5	0	1	4	4	11	1

04.09.04 France-Israel 0-0
04.09.04 Rep Ireland-Cyprus 3-0
04.09.04 Switzerland-Faroe Islands 6-0
08.09.04 Faroe Islands-France 0-2
08.09.04 Israel-Cyprus 2-1
08.09.04 Switzerland-Rep Ireland 1-1
09.10.04 Cyprus-Faroe Islands 2-2
09.10.04 France-Rep Ireland 0-0
09.10.04 Israel-Switzerland 2-2
13.10.04 Cyprus-France 0-2
13.10.04 Rep Ireland-Faroe Islands 2-0
17.11.04 Cyprus-Israel 1-2
26.03.05 Israel-Rep Ireland
26.03.05 France-Switzerland
30.03.05 Israel-France
30.03.05 Switzerland-Cyprus
04.06.05 Faroe Islands-Switzerland
04.06.05 Rep Ireland-Israel
08.06.05 Faroe Islands-Rep Ireland
17.08.05 Faroe Islands-Cyprus
03.09.05 France-Faroe Islands
03.09.05 Switzerland-Israel
07.09.05 Cyprus-Switzerland
07.09.05 Faroe Islands-Israel
07.09.05 Rep Ireland-France
08.10.05 Cyprus-Rep Ireland
08.10.05 Switzerland-France
08.10.05 Israel-Faroe Islands
12.10.05 France-Cyprus
12.10.05 Rep Ireland-Switzerland

Group 5

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Italy	4	3	0	1	7	5	9
Norway	4	2	1	1	6	3	7
Slovenia	4	2	1	1	4	3	7
Belarus	3	1	1	1	8	5	4
Scotland	3	0	2	1	1	2	2
Moldova	4	0	1	3	1	9	1

04.09.04 Italy-Norway 2-1
04.09.04 Slovenia-Moldova 3-0
08.09.04 Moldova-Italy 0-1
08.09.04 Norway-Belarus 1-1
08.09.04 Scotland-Slovenia 0-0
09.10.04 Belarus-Moldova 4-0
09.10.04 Scotland-Norway 0-1
09.10.04 Slovenia-Italy 1-0
13.10.04 Italy-Belarus 4-3
13.10.04 Moldova-Scotland 1-1
13.10.04 Norway-Slovenia 3-0
26.03.05 Italy-Scotland
30.03.05 Moldova-Norway
30.03.05 Slovenia-Belarus
04.06.05 Belarus-Slovenia
04.06.05 Norway-Italy
04.06.05 Scotland-Moldova
08.06.05 Belarus-Scotland
03.09.05 Moldova-Belarus
03.09.05 Scotland-Italy
03.09.05 Slovenia-Norway
07.09.05 Belarus-Italy
07.09.05 Moldova-Slovenia
07.09.05 Norway-Scotland
08.10.05 Italy-Slovenia
08.10.05 Norway-Moldova
08.10.05 Scotland-Belarus
12.10.05 Belarus-Norway
12.10.05 Italy-Moldova
12.10.05 Slovenia-Scotland

Group 6

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
England	4	3	1	0	7	3	10
Poland	4	3	0	1	10	5	9
Austria	4	1	2	1	8	8	5
N Ireland	4	0	3	1	5	8	3
Wales	4	0	2	2	5	8	2
Azerbaijan	4	0	2	2	1	4	2

04.09.04 Austria-England 2-2
04.09.04 Azerbaijan-Wales 1-1
04.09.04 Northern Ireland-Poland 0-3
08.09.04 Austria-Azerbaijan 2-0
08.09.04 Poland-England 1-2
08.09.04 Wales-Northern Ireland 2-2
09.10.04 Austria-Poland 1-3
09.10.04 Azerbaijan-Northern Ireland 0-0
09.10.04 England-Wales 2-0
13.10.04 Azerbaijan-England 0-1
13.10.04 Northern Ireland-Austria 3-3
13.10.04 Wales-Poland 2-3
26.03.05 England-Northern Ireland
26.03.05 Poland-Azerbaijan
26.03.05 Wales-Austria
30.03.05 Austria-Wales
30.03.05 England-Azerbaijan
30.03.05 Poland-Northern Ireland
04.06.05 Azerbaijan-Poland
03.09.05 Northern Ireland-Azerbaijan
03.09.05 Poland-Austria
03.09.05 Wales-England
07.09.05 Azerbaijan-Austria
07.09.05 Northern Ireland-England
07.09.05 Poland-Wales
08.10.05 England-Austria
08.10.05 Northern Ireland-Wales
12.10.05 Austria-Northern Ireland
12.10.05 England-Poland
12.10.05 Wales-Azerbaijan

Group 7

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Serbia & M'gro	4	3	1	0	10	0	10
Spain	4	2	2	0	8	1	8
Lithuania	4	2	2	0	6	1	8
Bosnia-Herz	2	0	2	0	1	1	2
Belgium	3	0	1	2	1	5	1
San Marino	5	0	0	5	0	18	0

04.09.04 Belgium-Lithuania 1-1
04.09.04 San Marino-Serbia & M'negro 0-3
08.09.04 Bosnia-Herzegovina-Spain 1-1
08.09.04 Lithuania-San Marino 4-0
09.10.04 Bosnia-Herz-Serbia & M'negro 0-0
09.10.04 Spain-Belgium 2-0
13.10.04 Lithuania-Spain 0-0
13.10.04 Serbia & M'negro-San Marino 5-0
17.11.04 Belgium-Serbia & M'negro 0-2
17.11.04 San Marino-Lithuania 0-1
09.02.05 Spain-San Marino 5-0
26.03.05 Belgium-Bosnia-Herzegovina
30.03.05 Bosnia-Herzegovina-Lithuania
30.03.05 San Marino-Belgium
30.03.05 Serbia & M'negro-Spain
04.06.05 San Marino-Bosnia-Herzegovina
04.06.05 Serbia & M'negro-Belgium
04.06.05 Spain-Lithuania
08.06.05 Spain-Bosnia-Herzegovina
03.09.05 Bosnia-Herzegovina-Belgium
03.09.05 Serbia & M'negro-Lithuania
07.09.05 Belgium-San Marino
07.09.05 Lithuania-Bosnia-Herzegovina
07.09.05 Spain-Serbia & M'negro
08.10.05 Belgium-Spain
08.10.05 Bosnia-Herzegovina-San Marino
08.10.05 Lithuania-Serbia & M'negro
12.10.05 Lithuania-Belgium
12.10.05 San Marino-Spain
12.10.05 Serbia & M'negro-Bosnia-Herz.

Group 8

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Sweden	4	3	0	1	14	2	9
Bulgaria	3	2	1	0	9	4	7
Croatia	3	2	1	0	6	2	7
Hungary	4	2	0	2	5	8	6
Iceland	4	0	1	3	4	10	1
Malta	4	0	1	3	1	13	1

04.09.04 Croatia-Hungary 3-0
04.09.04 Iceland-Bulgaria 1-3
04.09.04 Malta-Sweden 0-7
08.09.04 Hungary-Iceland 3-2
08.09.04 Sweden-Croatia 0-1
09.10.04 Croatia-Bulgaria 2-2
09.10.04 Malta-Iceland 0-0
09.10.04 Sweden-Hungary 3-0
13.10.04 Bulgaria-Malta 4-1
13.10.04 Iceland-Sweden 1-4
17.11.04 Malta-Hungary 0-2
26.03.05 Bulgaria-Sweden
26.03.05 Croatia-Iceland
30.03.05 Croatia-Malta
30.03.05 Hungary-Bulgaria
04.06.05 Bulgaria-Croatia
04.06.05 Iceland-Hungary
04.06.05 Sweden-Malta
08.06.05 Iceland-Malta
03.09.05 Hungary-Malta
03.09.05 Iceland-Croatia
03.09.05 Sweden-Bulgaria
07.09.05 Bulgaria-Iceland
07.09.05 Hungary-Sweden
07.09.05 Malta-Croatia
08.10.05 Bulgaria-Hungary
08.10.05 Croatia-Sweden
12.10.05 Hungary-Croatia
12.10.05 Malta-Bulgaria
12.10.05 Sweden-Iceland

Group winners and the two best runners-up qualify for finals. The other six runners-up are paired in three two-leg play-off matches, the winners of which also qualify for finals*
**Group runners-up will be ranked according to their results against the teams finishing 1st, 3rd, 4th, 5th and 6th in their respective groups*

European play-off matchdays:
Nov 12 (1st leg), Nov 16 (2nd leg), 2005

OCEANIA

0.5 finals berths

3rd stage

03.09.05 Solomon Islands-Australia
06.09.05 Australia-Solomon Islands

Winners meet the fifth-placed South American team over two legs for a place in finals

SOUTH AMERICA

4.5 finals berths

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Argentina	11	6	4	1	21	11	22
Brazil	11	5	5	1	19	11	20
Paraguay	11	4	4	3	12	11	16
Ecuador	11	5	1	5	12	11	16
Uruguay	11	4	2	5	16	23	14
Chile	11	3	4	4	10	11	13
Colombia	11	3	4	4	12	11	13
Venezuela	11	4	1	6	13	17	13
Peru	11	3	4	4	13	13	13
Bolivia	11	3	1	7	11	20	10

06.09.03 Argentina-Chile 2-2
06.09.03 Ecuador-Venezuela 2-0
06.09.03 Peru-Paraguay 4-1
07.09.03 Colombia-Brazil 1-2
07.09.03 Uruguay-Bolivia 5-0
09.09.03 Chile-Peru 2-1
09.09.03 Venezuela-Argentina 0-3
10.09.03 Bolivia-Colombia 4-0
10.09.03 Brazil-Ecuador 1-0

10.09.03	Paraguay-Uruguay	4-1
15.11.03	Argentina-Bolivia	3-0
15.11.03	Colombia-Venezuela	0-1
15.11.03	Paraguay-Ecuador	2-1
15.11.03	Uruguay-Chile	2-1
16.11.03	Peru-Brazil	1-1
18.11.03	Chile-Paraguay	0-1
18.11.03	Venezuela-Bolivia	2-1
19.11.03	Brazil-Uruguay	3-3
19.11.03	Colombia-Argentina	1-1
19.11.03	Ecuador-Peru	0-0
30.03.04	Argentina-Ecuador	1-0
30.03.04	Bolivia-Chile	0-2
31.03.04	Paraguay-Brazil	0-0
31.03.04	Peru-Colombia	0-2
31.03.04	Uruguay-Venezuela	0-3
01.06.04	Bolivia-Paraguay	2-1
01.06.04	Uruguay-Peru	1-3
01.06.04	Venezuela-Chile	0-1
02.06.04	Brazil-Argentina	3-1
02.06.04	Ecuador-Colombia	2-1
05.06.04	Ecuador-Bolivia	3-2
06.06.04	Argentina-Paraguay	0-0
06.06.04	Chile-Brazil	1-1
06.06.04	Colombia-Uruguay	5-0
06.06.04	Peru-Venezuela	0-0
04.09.04	Peru-Argentina	1-3
05.09.04	Brazil-Bolivia	3-1
05.09.04	Chile-Colombia	0-0
05.09.04	Paraguay-Venezuela	1-0
05.09.04	Uruguay-Ecuador	1-0
09.10.04	Argentina-Uruguay	4-2
09.10.04	Bolivia-Peru	1-0
09.10.04	Colombia-Paraguay	1-1
09.10.04	Venezuela-Brazil	2-5
10.10.04	Ecuador-Chile	2-0
12.10.04	Bolivia-Uruguay	0-0
13.10.04	Brazil-Colombia	0-0
13.10.04	Chile-Argentina	0-0
13.10.04	Paraguay-Peru	1-1
14.10.04	Venezuela-Ecuador	3-1
17.11.04	Argentina-Venezuela	3-2
17.11.04	Colombia-Bolivia	1-0
17.11.04	Ecuador-Brazil	1-0
17.11.04	Peru-Chile	2-1
17.11.04	Uruguay-Paraguay	1-0
26.03.05	Bolivia-Argentina	
26.03.05	Chile-Uruguay	
26.03.05	Venezuela-Colombia	
27.03.05	Brazil-Peru	
27.03.05	Ecuador-Paraguay	
29.03.05	Bolivia-Venezuela	
30.03.05	Argentina-Colombia	
30.03.05	Paraguay-Chile	
30.03.05	Peru-Ecuador	
30.03.05	Uruguay-Brazil	
04/05.06.05	Brazil-Paraguay	
04/05.06.05	Chile-Bolivia	
04/05.06.05	Colombia-Peru	
04/05.06.05	Ecuador-Argentina	
04/05.06.05	Venezuela-Uruguay	
07/08.06.05	Argentina-Brazil	
07/08.06.05	Chile-Venezuela	
07/08.06.05	Colombia-Ecuador	
07/08.06.05	Paraguay-Bolivia	
07/08.06.05	Peru-Uruguay	
03/04.09.05	Bolivia-Ecuador	
03/04.09.05	Brazil-Chile	
03/04.09.05	Paraguay-Argentina	
03/04.09.05	Uruguay-Colombia	
03/04.09.05	Venezuela-Peru	
08/09.10.05	Argentina-Peru	
08/09.10.05	Bolivia-Brazil	
08/09.10.05	Colombia-Chile	
08/09.10.05	Ecuador-Uruguay	
08/09.10.05	Venezuela-Paraguay	
11/12.10.05	Brazil-Venezuela	
11/12.10.05	Chile-Ecuador	
11/12.10.05	Paraguay-Colombia	
11/12.10.05	Peru-Bolivia	
11/12.10.05	Uruguay-Argentina	

Top four qualify for finals; fifth-placed team meet the Oceania section winners over two legs for a place in finals

INTERNATIONALS

Sunday, February 13

Feb 13 - Waterford - friendly
Barbados 3 (N Forde 5, Lucas 29, James 56)
Guyana 3 (G Richardson 21, Cadogan 36, Abrams 71)
HT: 2-2. **Att:** 6,000. **Ref:** Callender (Bar)
Sent off: Holligan (Guy)

Feb 13 - Fort Lauderdale, USA - friendly
Guatemala 2 (Villatoro 18, Castillo 70)
Haiti 1 (Cadet 61)
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 10,000. **Ref:** Salazar (USA)
Guatemala: Klee (Motta 46) - Cabrera, Martinez (Morales 46), Sanabria (Ramirez 66), Quinonez, Figueroa (Brown 46), Castillo, Rivera (Davila 46), Antonio (Romero 46), Villatoro (Sandoval 46), Plata.
Haiti: Fenelon - Bruny, Santcius, Gilles, Desir, Germain, Chery, Romulus, Dorcelus (Stiot 67), Cadet, Descollines.

Wednesday, February 16

Feb 16 - Heredia - friendly
Costa Rica 1 (Alfaro 46)
Ecuador 2 (M Ayovi pen 60, Guagua 87)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 1,000. **Ref:** Duran (CR)
Costa Rica: Porras - A Castro (Myrie 50), Umana, Pena, Diaz, Badilla, D Fonseca (Segura 46), A Solis (Scott 85), Sequeira (Miller 80), Alfaro (Cubero 51), Wilson.
Ecuador: Villafuerte - Ambrossi, G Espinoza, Guagua, Reasco, Mendez, W Ayovi (Saritama 80), M Ayovi, E Tenorio (Vincent 54), O Tenorio (Lara 88), Valencia.

Wednesday, February 23

Feb 23 - Brazzaville - friendly
Congo 0
Angola 2 (Flavio 43, Ze Calanga 74)
HT: 0-1

Feb 23 - Culiacan - friendly
Mexico 1 (Fonseca 55)
Colombia 1 (Perea 58)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 10,000. **Ref:** Gasso (Mex)
Mexico: O Perez (Munoz 71) - Carmona (Altamirano 46), F Rodriguez, Galindo, Salcido (Pineda 46), Lopez, L Perez (Osorno 46), Lozano (Arce 61), Naelson (Juan P Rodriguez 59), Fonseca, A Medina (Bravo 63).
Colombia: B Castillo - Mendoza, Anchico, Orozco, Mosquera, J C Ramirez, Garcia, J Restrepo (Casanas 69), Pacheco (A Ramirez 71), Preciado (Perea 46), Rey (Hurtado 61).

Saturday, February 26

Feb 26 - Gaborone - friendly
Botswana 0
Zambia 0

Sunday, February 27

Feb 27 - Blantyre - friendly
Malawi 2 (Tambala 45, V Phiri 51)
Zimbabwe 1 (Tsipa 54)
HT: 1-0
Malawi: Sanudi - Kondowe, Mwalweni, Msowoya, Ndlovu, Chipatala, G Banda, Ng'ambi (Chirapondwa), Tambala, V Phiri (Mkandawire), Malidad.
Zimbabwe: Murambadoro - Mwanjali (Nenzou), Chimedza (Maroto), Kurauzvione, J Matola, Gombami, Sibanda, Matawu (Badza), Lunga, Tsipa, Chinyama.

Wednesday, March 9

Mar 9 - Los Angeles, USA - friendly
Mexico 1 (Fuentes og 23)
Argentina 1 (Zarate 67)
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 51,345. **Ref:** Hall (USA)
Mexico: O Perez - Altamirano (Mendez 75), H Sanchez, Osorio, F Rodriguez, Salcido, Pardo (Lopez 77), R Morales (Bravo 71), Naelson (R Garcia 71), Fonseca (Peralta 86), C Blanco (Briseno 64).
Argentina: Lux - Fuentes, Tuzzio, Diaz, Zapata, Castroman (Belluschi 46), Mascherano, Romagnoli, Insua (Lopez 61), Palacio (Sosa 86), Zarate (Romero 75).

Mar 9 - Fullerton - friendly
United States 3 (Noonan 25, Marshall 33, Mathis 66)
Colombia 0
HT: 2-0. **Att:** 7,086. **Ref:** Rodriguez (Mex)
United States: Busch - Mullan, Marshall, Kotschau, Albright, Mastroeni (Borchers 86), Dempsey, Ralston (Gaven 76), Mathis (Twellman 68), Noonan (Martino 83), Johnson (Ching 71).
Sent off: Twellman 76min.
Colombia: Henao - Orozco, Mosquera (De La Cuesta 46), Fawcett, Mendoza, J C Ramirez (Hurtado 46), Perea (Casanas 46), Pacheco (Rodallega 61), J Restrepo, Zuniga (Viafara 46), Rey (A Ramirez 77).

2005 GOLD CUP QUALIFIERS

CARIBBEAN ZONE
(tournament doubled as the Caribbean Cup)

Final rnd

In Waterford, Barbados

Feb 20
Jamaica 2 (Shelton 13, A Williams 35)
Trinidad & Tobago 1 (N Pierre 37)
HT: 2-1. **Att:** 5,000. **Ref:** Callender (Bar)
Jamaica: S Sawyers - Taylor, Stewart, Marshall, Reid, F Davis, Daley (Stephenson 75), Hue (Kelly 77), A Williams, Dean (Bennett 81), Shelton.
Trinidad & Tobago: D Williams - Rojas (Seabra 40), King, K Thomas, Fitzpatrick, Eve, Nakhid (Theobald 46), Glenn, A Pierre, N Pierre, C Gray (Sealy 85).

Feb 20
Barbados 0
Cuba 3 (More 24, 71, Galindo 90)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 5,000. **Ref:** Prendergast (Jam)
Barbados: Howell (Boxhill 10) - Vaughan (Lovell 58), Cox, Sobers, Goodridge, M Forde, Riley (Lucas 55), Parris, Stanford, Grosvenor, N Forde.
Cuba: Molina - Pedro, Marquez, Cruzata, Aquino (L Perez 13), A Cervantes (Morales 62), More, Galindo, Colome, R Cervantes, Faife (Ramirez 77).

Feb 22
Trinidad & Tobago 1 (Glenn 13)
Cuba 2 (More 23, 48)
HT: 1-1. **Att:** 2,100. **Ref:** Lancaster (Guy)
Trinidad & Tobago: D Williams - L Andrews, K Thomas, King (C Gray 36), Fitzpatrick (Eve 74), Sealy (C Smith 76), Seabra, Theobald, Nakhid, Glenn, A Pierre.
Cuba: Molina - Pedro, Marquez, Cruzata (Pedraza 51), L Perez, A Cervantes (Ramirez 63), More (Alcantara 70), Galindo, Colome, R Cervantes, Faife.

Feb 22
Barbados 0
Jamaica 1 (A Williams 8)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 2,100. **Ref:** Brizan (T&T)
Barbados: Boxhill - James, Defreitas, Cox, Lovell (Vaughan 70), Lucas, Goodridge, Riley (Stanford 60), Parris, N Forde (K Hall 60), Brathwaite. *Sent off: Parris 54min.*
Jamaica: S Sawyers - Stewart, Taylor, A Williams, Hue (Stephenson 64), Dean (Bennett 67), Marshall, Daley (Kelly 72), Reid, Shelton, F Davis.

Feb 24
Cuba 0
Jamaica 1 (Shelton 48)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 3,000. **Ref:** Brizan (T&T)
Cuba: Molina - Pedro, Marquez, Pedraza, A Cervantes (Ramirez 64), More (Alcantara 64), Galindo, Colome, Morales, R Cervantes, Faife (L Perez 56).
Jamaica: S Sawyers - Taylor, Stewart, T Sawyers, F Davis, Scarlett, Daley, Hue (Stephenson 54), A Williams, Shelton (Bennett 88), Sterling (Dean 72).

Feb 24
Barbados 2 (N Forde 32, Lucas 86)
Trinidad & Tobago 3 (C Smith 11, Glenn 30, Eve 75)
HT: 1-2. **Att:** 3,000. **Ref:** Prendergast (Jam)
Barbados: Howell - James, De Freitas, Cox, Lovell (K Hall 72), Lucas, Goodridge, M Forde (Riley 61), Stanford, N Forde, Brathwaite.
Trinidad & Tobago: D Williams - Henry, K Thomas, Fitzpatrick, Eve, Seabra (L Andrews 89), Theobald (Baptiste 83), Glenn, C Smith (Sealy 64), A Pierre, Jack.

CARIBBEAN ZONE – FINAL RND – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Jamaica	3	3	0	0	4	1	9
Cuba	3	2	0	1	5	2	6
Trinidad & Tob	3	1	0	2	5	6	3
Barbados	3	0	0	3	2	7	0

Top three qualified for Gold Cup finals, to be held in the USA from July 6 to 24

CENTRAL AMERICA ZONE
(tournament doubled as the UNCAF Nations Cup)

In Guatemala City

Group A

Feb 19
Honduras 5 (Nunez 19, 84, Velasquez 42, 51, 73)
Nicaragua 1 (Bustos 54)
HT: 2-0. **Ref:** Moreno (Pan)
Honduras: Coello - Mendoza, W Palacios, Ferrera, Pacheco, Lopez (Reyes 71), Vallecillo, Guerrero, Moran (Gonzalez 61), Velasquez, Nunez.
Nicaragua: Espinoza - Quintanilla, Balladares, Alonso, Franklin Lopez, Rodriguez, Calero (T Acevedo 42), Reyes (Bustos 29), Sanchez, Martin, M Acevedo (Vilchez 79).

Feb 19
Guatemala 2 (Villatoro 35, Plata pen 72)
Belize 0
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Quesada (CR)
Guatemala: Klee - Morales, Romero, Villatoro (Sandoval 70), Ramirez, Figueroa (Castillo 78), Martinez, Rivera (Davila 60), Plata, Quinonez, Sanabria.
Belize: Orio - Thurton (Dorado 72), Symms, Eiley, R Celiz, Pipersburgh, Roches, Lennon (Morales 78), O Lyons, Smith (Slusher 80), Alvarez.

Feb 21
Belize 0
Honduras 4 (Velasquez 7, Nunez 33, 80, W Palacios 88)
HT: 0-2. **Ref:** Campos (Nic)
Belize: Orio - Symms, Eiley, R Celiz (Palacios 85), Linarez (Morales 55), Pipersburgh, Roches, Lennon, O Lyons, Smith (G Celiz 60), Alvarez.
Honduras: Coello - Mendoza, W Palacios, Ferrera, Pacheco, Lopez (Reyes 63), Vallecillo, Guerrero, Moran (Berrios 83), Velasquez (Ramirez 67), Nunez.

Feb 21
Guatemala 4 (Plata 11, Sandoval 30, 77, Villatoro 66)
Nicaragua 0
HT: 2-0. **Ref:** Sibrian (ES)
Guatemala: Motta - G Cabrera, Castillo (Figueroa 60), Martinez, Plata, Zacarias (Ramirez 69), Quinonez, Sandoval, Davila (Villatoro 61), Sanabria, Brown.
Nicaragua: Espinoza - Quintanilla, Jerez, Vilchez, T Acevedo, Franklin Lopez (M Acevedo 51), Rodriguez, Bustos, Sanchez (Balladares 70), Ruiz (Alonso 63), Aviles. *Sent off: Bustos 54min, Rodriguez 62min.*

Feb 23
Nicaragua 1 (Vilchez 85)
Belize 0
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Quesada (CR)
Nicaragua: Espinoza (Mendieta 70) - Quintanilla, Vilchez, Alonso, T Acevedo (Balladares 89), Franklin Lopez, Reyes, Sanchez (Calero 59), Ruiz, M Acevedo, Aviles.
Belize: Orio - Symms, Eiley, R Celiz (Palacio 80), Pipersburgh, Roches, Lennon, Morales (G Celiz 89), O Lyons, Smith, Alvarez (Slusher 70). *Sent off: Smith 73min.*

Feb 23
Guatemala 1 (Romero 21)
Honduras 1 (Velasquez 71)
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Moreno (Pan)
Guatemala: Klee - Morales, G Cabrera, Romero, Castillo (Figueroa 85), Ramirez, Martinez, Plata (Villatoro 70), Quinonez, Sandoval, Sanabria.
Honduras: Coello - Henriquez, W Palacios (Ferrera 81), Pacheco, Lopez (Reyes 46), Vallecillo, Berrios, Thomas, Guerrero (Gonzalez 32), Velasquez, Nunez.

CENTRAL AMERICA ZONE – GP A

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Honduras	3	2	1	0	10	2	7
Guatemala	3	2	1	0	7	1	7
Nicaragua	3	1	0	2	2	9	3
Belize	3	0	0	3	0	7	0

Group B

Feb 19
El Salvador 0
Panama 1 (Solis 77)
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Archundia (Mex)
El Salvador: Alfaro - Tobar, Gonzalez, Benitez, V Velasquez, Umana, Campos, Umanzor (Alas 83), Corrales (Alvarez 52), Murgas, Pacheco. *Sent off: Benitez 85min.*

Panama: Gonzalez - Moreno, Anthony, L Henriquez, Mitre (Solis 60), Perez, Gomez (Cubilla 70), Medina, A Henriquez, Phillips, Aguilar (Gun 60).

Feb 21
Costa Rica 2 (Wilson 75, Myrie 90)
El Salvador 1 (Alas 40)
HT: 0-1. **Ref:** Batres (Gtm)
Costa Rica: Porras - Umana, A Castro (Myrie 56), D Fonseca, Pena, A Solis, Badilla (Soto 70), Diaz, Alfaro (Scott 46), Sequeira, Wilson. *Sent off: D Fonseca 28min.*
El Salvador: Alfaro - Tobar, Marvin Gonzalez (Prado 46), V Velasquez, Alvarez (Corrales 46), Umana, Campos, Umanzor (S Rivera 60), Alas, Murgas, Pacheco. *Sent off: Alfaro 60min, S Rivera 77min, Corrales 90min.*

Feb 23
Panama 0
Costa Rica 1 (Myrie 83)
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Archundia (Mex)
Panama: Penedo - Moreno, Anthony, L Henriquez, Gomez (Cubilla 79), Medina, A Henriquez, Solis (Mitre 79), Gun, Phillips, Aguilar. *Sent off: L Henriquez 53min.*
Costa Rica: Grant - Umana, Cubero, Pena (Diaz 46), Soto, Miller, Segura, Badilla (Scott 60), Myrie, Sequeira, Wilson (A Solis 60).

CENTRAL AMERICA ZONE – GP B

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Costa Rica	2	2	0	0	3	1	6
Panama	2	1	0	1	1	1	3
El Salvador	2	0	0	2	1	3	0

Semi-finals

Feb 25
Honduras 1 (Velasquez 75)
Panama 0
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 11,159. **Ref:** Sibrian (ElS)
Honduras: Coello - Henriquez, Mendoza, W Palacios (Reyes 83), Ferrera, Pacheco, Lopez (Thomas 89), Berrios, Moran (Gonzalez 73), Velasquez, Nunez.
Panama: Gonzalez - Solanilla, Moreno, Anthony, Gomez, Medina, A Henriquez (Mitre 61), Solis, Gun, Phillips, Aguilar.

Feb 25
Costa Rica 4 (Segura 9, Sequeira 22, Wilson 41, Scott 61)
Guatemala 0
HT: 3-0. **Att:** 11,159. **Ref:** Archundia (Mex)
Costa Rica: Porras - Umana, D Fonseca, Pena, A Solis (Soto 80), Segura (Badilla 66), Diaz, Myrie, Sequeira, Wilson (Alfaro 71), Scott.
Guatemala: Motta - Morales, G Cabrera, Romero, Ramirez, Figueroa, Martinez, Rivera, Plata (Sandoval 57), Quinonez, Brown (Villatoro 33).

Third-place play-off

Feb 27
Panama 0
Guatemala 3 (Villatoro 7, Plata 41, 49)
HT: 0-2. **Att:** 1,491. **Ref:** Quesada (CR)
Panama: Gonzalez - Solanilla, Moreno, Anthony, Gomez, Medina, A Henriquez (L Henriquez 24), Solis (Mitre 54), Gun, Phillips, Aguilar (Cubilla 46). *Sent off: Gun 76min.*
Guatemala: Motta - Morales, Romero, Villatoro (Sandoval 63), Ramirez, Figueroa, Martinez, Rivera (Davila 46), Plata, Quinonez (G Cabrera 52), Sanabria.

Final

Feb 27
Honduras 1 (Nunez 58)
Costa Rica 1 (Wilson 68)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 1,491. **Ref:** Batres (Gtm)
Costa Rica 7-6 on pens
Honduras: Coello - Mendoza, W Palacios (Reyes 68), Ferrera, Pacheco, Lopez, Vallecillo, Berrios, Guerrero, Velasquez, Nunez.
Costa Rica: Porras - Umana, D Fonseca, Pena, A Solis (Soto 59), Segura (Cubero 65), Diaz, Myrie, Sequeira, Wilson, Scott (Alfaro 90).

The four semi-finalists qualified for Gold Cup finals, to be held in the USA from July 6 to 24

COSAFA CUP

Group A

In Curepipe, Mauritius

Semi-finals

Feb 26
Mauritius 2 (Appou 45, Louis 48)
Madagascar 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 3,000. **Ref:** Fakude (Swa)
Mauritius: Doro - G Edouard, L'Enfle, Speville, Mourgine, Periatambee, Bayaram, Louis (Collet 67), Cundasamy (R Naboth 85), Appou, Perle (Jeannot 62).
Madagascar: Rambelomasina - Ranziatsoalaza, Randrianarisoa, Randrianrisoa, Rahajaniaina, Razafindrabe (Rabeariniala 52), Rafebdarinosy (Lantohasindrainy 71), Joavy (Tsaralaza 87), Rajaoniasy, Dedy, Rabemanajara.

Feb 26
Seychelles 0
South Africa 3 (Mphela 12, 16, Chabangu 44)
HT: 0-3. **Att:** 3,000. **Ref:** Roheemun (Mrs)
Seychelles: Sopha - Bibi, Larame (Ladouche 67), Esther, Nibourette, Rose, W Brutus, Dufrene (J Brutus 88), Balde, Barbe, Zialor (Ravania 63).
South Africa: Baloyi - Thwala, Mabizela, Johannes, Isaacs, Davids (Zuma 25), Siphika, Chabangu, Mngomeni (Tihomelang 82), Mphela (Hendricks 60), Ndlovu.

Final

Feb 27
Mauritius 0
South Africa 1 (Mphela 36)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 3,500. **Ref:** Mnkantjo (Zim)
Mauritius: Doro - G Edouard, L'Enfle, Speville, Mourgine, Periatambee, Bayaram, Louis (Godon 56), Cundasamy, Appou (Perle 54), R Naboth (Jeannot 73). *Sent off: L'Enfle 90min.*
South Africa: Baloyi - Mogaila, Thwala, Mabizela, Johannes, Siphika, Chabangu, Noble, Mphela, Mngomeni, Ndlovu (Hendricks 62).

Group B

In Windhoek, Namibia
Apr 16: Semi-final - Mozambique v Zimbabwe.
Apr 16: Semi-final - Namibia v Botswana.
Apr 17: Final

Group C

In Lusaka, Zambia
June 11: Semi-final - Lesotho v Malawi.
June 11: Semi-final - Zambia v Swaziland.
June 12: Final.

Group winners qualify for the final group, to be held in August, along with holders Angola

CEMAC CUP

(Central African Economic and Monetary Community)

In Libreville, Gabon

Group A

Feb 3
Gabon 4 (Akoue pen 32, T Nguema 42, Yinda 52, 82)
Central African Republic 0
HT: 2-0

Feb 6
Central African Republic 0
Congo 1 (Ndey 10)
HT: 0-1

Feb 8
Gabon 1 (Poaty 38)
Congo 0
HT: 1-0

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Gabon	2	2	0	0	5	0	6
Congo	2	1	0	1	1	1	3
Cent Af Rep	2	0	0	2	0	5	0

Group B

Feb 3
Cameroon Amateurs 1 (Mbangue 11)
Chad 1 (Doumbe 57)
HT: 1-0

Feb 5
Cameroon Amateurs 3 (Mbangue 17, Yende pen 46, Essosso 81)
Equatorial Guinea 0
HT: 1-0

Feb 8
Equatorial Guinea 0
Chad 0

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Cameroon Amat	2	1	1	0	4	1	4
Chad	2	0	2	0	1	1	2
Equat Guinea	2	0	1	1	0	3	1

Semi-finals

Feb 10
Gabon 2 (Akoue pen 58, Mabiala 69)
Chad 3 (Djenet 3, Doumbe 8, Nguembaye 56)
HT: 0-2

Feb 10
Cameroon Amateurs 0
Congo 0
Aet
Cameroon Amateurs 4-3 on pens

Third-place play-off

Feb 12
Gabon 2 (Yembi 37, Akoue pen 85)
Congo 1 (Lakou 35)
HT: 1-1

Final

Feb 12
Chad 0
Cameroon Amateurs 1 (Mbangue pen 21)
HT: 0-1

WAFU CUP

In Bamako, Mali

Semi-finals

Feb 24
Mali 2 (Kone, I Coulibaly)
Ivory Coast 1 (Koune)

Feb 24
Nigeria U-20s 1 (Promise 92)
Senegal 0
Aet. **HT:** 0-0. **90mins:** 0-0

Third-place play-off

Feb 27
Senegal 1
Ivory Coast 0

Final

Feb 27
Mali 3
Nigeria U-20s 0
HT: 2-0

WORLD

Feb 15 - Barcelona - Asian tsunami fundraiser
Ronaldinho XI 6 (Eto'o 13, 45, Ronaldinho 19, H Camara 60, 65, Cha Doo-ri 80)
Shevchenko XI 3 (Del Piero 25, Zola 50, D Suazo 59)
HT: 3-1. **Att:** 40,770. **Ref:** Collina (Ita)
Ronaldinho XI: Dida (I C Kameni 46) - Cafu (Jaidi 46), Radebe, I Cordoba, Song, Marquez (Cha Doo-ri 46), Deco (Beasley 46), Kaka (Park Ji-sung 46), Ronaldinho (Martins 60), H Nakata (Mahdavikia 46), Eto'o (H Camara 46).
Shevchenko XI: Casillas (Toldo 46) - Deisler, Thuram (Kompany 46), Montero (Kuffour 46), Kaladze (Vogel 46), Beckham (Litmanen 46), Gerrard, Zidane (Giuly 46), Del Piero (Zola 46), Shevchenko (D Suazo 46), Raul (Henry 46; Hakan Sukur 66).

EUROPE

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

See page 80

UEFA CUP

1st knockout rnd, 1st legs

February 16

Ajax (Hol) 1 (Maxwell 36)
Auxerre (Fra) 0
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Jara (Cze)

Panathinaikos (Gre) 1 (Vintra 75)
Sevilla (Spa) 0
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Colombo (Fra)

Parma (Ita) 0
Stuttgart (Ger) 0
Ref: Allaerts (Blg)

Partizan Belgrade (Ser) 2 (Odita 12, 45)
Dnipro (Ukr) 2 (Nazarenko 28, Rusol 57)
HT: 2-1. **Ref:** Hansson (Swe)

Shakhtar Donetsk (Ukr) 1 (Brandao 86)
Schalke (Ger) 1 (Ailton 7)
HT: 0-1. **Ref:** Berntsen (Nor)

Sporting Lisbon (Por) 2 (Custodio 22, Liedson 36)
Feyenoord (Hol) 1 (Goor 11)
HT: 2-1. **Ref:** Messner (Aut)
Sent off: Custodio (Sporting) 65min

Valencia (Spa) 2 (Di Vaio 38, Aimar 52)
Steaua Bucharest (Rom) 0
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Messina (Ita)

February 17

Alemannia Aachen (Ger) 0
AZ Alkmaar (Hol) 0
Ref: Kasnaferis (Gre)

Basle (Swi) 0
Lille (Fra) 0
Ref: Genov (Bul)

CSKA Moscow (Rus) 2 (V Berezutsky 12, Vagner Love 60)
Benfica (Por) 0
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Tudor (Rom)

Fenerbahce (Tur) 0
Zaragoza (Spa) 1 (Alvaro 72)
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Vollquartz (Den)

Grazer AK (Aut) 2 (Bazina 64, Kollmann 79)
Middlesbrough (Eng) 2 (Zenden 52, Hasselbaink 66)
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Trivkovic (Cro)
Sent off: Kollmann (Grazer AK) 80min

Heerenveen (Hol) 1 (Huntelaar 24)
Newcastle (Eng) 2 (Shearer 68, Bowyer 82)
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Szabo (Hun)
Sent off: Bowyer (Newcastle) 86min

Kyiv Dynamo (Ukr) 0
Villarreal (Spa) 0
Ref: Duhamel (Fra)

Olympiakos (Gre) 1 (Okkas 29)
Sochaux (Fra) 0
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Ivanov (Rus)

February 24

Austria Wien (Aut) 0
Athletic Bilbao (Spa) 0
Ref: Yefet (Isr)

1st knockout rnd, 2nd legs

February 24

Auxerre 3 (Kalou 31, Cheyrou 55, Mathis 86)
Ajax 1 (Babel 36)
HT: 1-1. **Ref:** Benquerenca (Por)
Auxerre 3-2 on agg

AZ Alkmaar 2 (Van Galen 62, Mathijsen 80)
Alemannia Aachen 1 (Meijer 31)
HT: 0-1. **Ref:** Ceferin (Sln)
Sent off: Stehle (Alemannia) 72min
AZ 2-1 on agg

Benfica 1 (Karadas 63)
CSKA Moscow 1 (Ignashevich 49)
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** McDonald (Sco)
CSKA 3-1 on agg

Dnipro 0
Partizan Belgrade 1 (Radovic 88)
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Fleischer (Ger)
Sent off: Ilic (Partizan) 43min
Partizan 3-2 on agg

Feyenoord 1 (Hofs 89)
Sporting Lisbon 2 (Liedson 62, Rochemback 83)
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Meyer (Ger)
Sporting 4-2 on agg

Lille 2 (Moussilou 37, Acimovic pen 78)
Basle 0
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Proenca (Por)
Lille 2-0 on agg

Middlesbrough 2 (Morrison 18, Hasselbaink 60)
Grazer AK 1 (Bazina 8)
HT: 1-1. **Ref:** Iturralde Gonzalez (Spa)
Middlesbrough 4-3 on agg

Newcastle 2 (Breuer og 10, Shearer 25)
Heerenveen 1 (Bruggink pen 79)
HT: 2-0. **Ref:** Delevic (Ser)
Newcastle 4-2 on agg

Schalke 0
Shakhtar Donetsk 1 (Aghahowa 22)
HT: 0-1. **Ref:** Hrinak (Slk)
Shakhtar 2-1 on agg

Sevilla 2 (Makukula 83, Adriano 90)
Panathinaikos 0
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Ovrebo (Nor)
Sent off: Gonzalez (Panathinaikos) 74min
Sevilla 2-1 on agg

Sochaux 0
Olympiakos 1 (Stoltidis 67)
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Nobs (Swi)
Olympiakos 2-0 on agg

Steaua Bucharest 2 (Cristea 50, 71)
Valencia 0
Aet. **HT:** 0-0. **90mins:** 2-0. **Ref:** Verbist (Blg)
Agg 2-2. Steaua 4-3 on pens

Stuttgart 0
Parma 2 (Marchionni 100, Pisanu 116)
Aet. **HT:** 0-0. **90mins:** 0-0. **Ref:** Clark (Sco)
Sent off: Cannavaro (Parma) 81min
Parma 2-0 on agg

Villarreal 2 (Figueroa 20, Cazorla 31)
Kyiv Dynamo 0
HT: 2-0. **Ref:** Messias (Eng)
Sent off: Riquelme (Villarreal) 42min
Villarreal 2-0 on agg

Zaragoza 2 (Galletti 11, Savio 71)
Fenerbahce 1 (Alex 88)
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Braamhaar (Hol)
Zaragoza 3-1 on agg

February 27

Athletic Bilbao 1 (Yeste pen 19)
Austria Wien 2 (Sionko 35, 70)
HT: 1-1. **Ref:** Gilewski (Pol)
Austria Wien 2-1 on agg

2nd knockout rnd, 1st legs

March 10

Austria Wien 1 (Rushfeldt 32)
Zaragoza 1 (Savio 74)
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Frojdfeldt (Swe)

Lille 0
Auxerre 1 (Akale 45)
HT: 0-1. **Ref:** Baskakov (Rus)

Middlesbrough 2 (Job 79, Riggott 86)
Sporting Lisbon 3 (Pedro Barbosa 49, Liedson 53, Douala 65)
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Farina (Ita)

Olympiakos 1 (Djordjevic pen 14)
Newcastle 3 (Shearer pen 12, Robert 33, Kluivert 68)
HT: 1-2. **Ref:** Dauden Ibanez (Spa)
Sent off: Georgatos 10min, Kostoulas 43min (both Olympiakos)

Partizan Belgrade 1 (Tomic pen 83)
CSKA Moscow 1 (Aldonin 17)
HT: 0-1. **Ref:** Wegereef (Hol)

Sevilla 0
Parma 0
Ref: Temmink (Hol)

Shakhtar Donetsk 1 (Matuzalem 45)
AZ Alkmaar 3 (Nelisse 27, Mathijsen 51, Perez pen 90)
HT: 1-1. **Ref:** Layec (Fra)

Steaua Bucharest v Villarreal 1st leg - Mar 16

AUSTRIA

Feb 19: Sturm Graz 3 Salzburg 1; Wacker Tirol 3 Bregenz 2.
Feb 26: Mattersburg 2 Admira 3; Salzburg 1 Wacker Tirol 1.
Feb 27: Grazer AK 4 Sturm Graz 0.
Mar 5: Sturm Graz 1 Austria Wien 0; Wacker Tirol 1 Grazer AK 1; Bregenz 0 Mattersburg 0.
Mar 9: Pasching 1 Mattersburg 0.

AUSTRIA

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Pasching	22	14	2	6	40	29	44
Rapid Wien	21	12	7	2	39	16	43
Austria Wien	22	12	6	4	42	14	42
Grazer AK	23	11	5	7	32	22	38
Wacker Tirol	24	8	7	9	37	36	31
Mattersburg	24	8	5	11	33	40	29
Sturm Graz	24	7	5	12	21	33	26
Admira	22	7	3	12	26	39	24
Salzburg	23	5	6	12	26	35	21
Bregenz	23	4	6	13	23	55	18

BELGIUM

Saturday, February 12
Anderlecht 0
Ostende 1 (Nijs 25) Att: 23,007

Beveren 2 (Sanogo 10, Romaric 80)
Mouscron 2 (De Vleeschauwer 38, Zewlakow 50) Att: 3,500

La Louviere 0
Lokeren 0 Att: 4,066

Westerlo 1 (Paas 75)
FC Brussels 0 Att: 3,500

Sunday, February 13
Club Brugge 1 (Lange 46)
Charleroi 1 (Macquet 36) Att: 22,988

Germinal Beerschot 2 (Hoefkens 12, Cadu 33)
Cercle Brugge 3 (Masureel 30, De Smet 71, Vandenbussche 88) Att: 6,500

Mons 4 (Nijock 14, 63, La Placa 53, Gousse 79)
Lierse 1 (Mitu 32) Att: 3,500

Friday, February 18
Lierse 1 (Fassotte 14)
Anderlecht 1 (Jestrovic pen 87) Att: 9,408

Saturday, February 19
Charleroi 1 (Milas og 71)
Mons 0 Att: 14,769

Genk 3 (Soetaers pen 31, Vandenbergh 70, 75)
Westerlo 2 (Utaka 37, K Janssens 44) Att: 23,532

Gent 1 (Smoje pen 11)
Beveren 0 Att: 6,852

Lokeren 0
Standard 0 Att: 7,500

Mouscron 1 (Zewlakow 10)
La Louviere 1 (Matton 12) Att: 5,646

Ostende 1 (Joly pen 90)
St Truiden 0 Att: 2,800

Sunday, February 20
FC Brussels 2 (Snelders 6, Culek pen 31)
Germinal Beerschot 1 (Cruz 76) Att: 4,500

Cercle Brugge 1 (Dekelver 10)
Club Brugge 2 (Lange 74, Matondo 75) Att: 12,450

Friday, February 25
Mons 1 (Londo 27)
Anderlecht 2 (Jestrovic pen 37, 42) Att: 5,000

Standard 1 (Rapajic 75)
Genk 0 Att: 16,500

Saturday, February 26
St Truiden 0
Gent 2 (Jbari 9, 61) Att: 6,000

Tuesday, March 8
Anderlecht 3 (Mpenza 34, Jestrovic 42, pen 86)
Charleroi 0

Gent 1 (Smoje pen 77)
Mouscron 0

Wednesday, March 9
Beveren 2 (Romaric 47, Sanogo 55)
Ostende 2 (Zoko 44, Van Rumst 72)

Club Brugge 4 (Ceh 15, Van der Heyden 38, Lange 45, 90)
FC Brussels 1 (De Camargo 35)

Germinal Beerschot 3 (Cavens 36, 38, Monteyne 51)
Genk 1 (Vandenbergh 84)

Mons 1 (Schaessens 89)
Cercle Brugge 3 (Meyssen 76, Roiha 81, Dekelver 86)

St Truiden 4 (De Conde 4, Buvens 6, 29, Debroux 78)
Lierse 0

Westerlo 1 (Haraldsen 7)
Lokeren 1 (Bance 16)

BELGIUM

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Club Brugge	24	20	3	1	65	16	63
Anderlecht	23	15	4	4	48	22	49
Genk	24	13	6	5	36	26	45
Standard	23	13	5	5	38	21	44
Gent	24	13	4	7	35	24	43
Charleroi	24	12	6	6	30	25	42
La Louviere	22	10	6	6	31	19	36
Westerlo	24	10	4	10	25	35	34
Lokeren	24	8	9	7	27	27	33
Lierse	24	8	5	11	39	45	29
Cercle Brugge	24	8	4	12	35	58	28
Beveren	24	7	6	11	33	40	27
Mouscron	24	6	6	12	32	34	24
Germinal B	24	6	5	13	24	30	23
St Truiden	24	6	5	13	28	41	23
Ostende	24	4	7	13	23	46	19
Mons	24	5	3	16	29	43	18
FC Brussels	24	5	2	17	21	47	17

LEADING GOALSCORERS
12 Sambegou Bangoura (Standard)
12 Rune Lange (Club Brugge)
12 Marcin Zewlakow (Mouscron)
11 Ndri Romaric (Beveren)
11 Moussa Sanogo (Beveren)

BULGARIA

Feb 26: Cherno More 1 Vidima-Rakovski 0; Lokomotiv Sofia 2 Lovech 1; Beroe 1 Marek 0; Naftex 0 Pirin 1; Nesebar 1 Lokomotiv Plovdiv 2; Slavia 0 Levski 2.
Feb 27: Spartak Varna 1 Belasitsa 0; CSKA 1 Rodopa 0.
Mar 5: Rodopa 3 Nesebar 1; Lokomotiv Plovdiv 1 Naftex 0; Pirin 2 Spartak Varna 0; Belasitsa 1 Beroe 1; Marek 1 Lokomotiv Sofia 1; Lovech 2 Cherno More 0; Vidima-Rakovski 1 Levski 4; CSKA 4 Slavia 0.

BULGARIA

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
CSKA	17	14	3	0	51	9	45
Levski	17	14	3	0	43	9	45
Lok Plovdiv	17	11	3	3	38	15	36
Lovech	17	9	2	6	31	20	29
Slavia	17	8	4	5	23	22	28
Marek	17	5	6	6	18	23	21
Cherno More	17	6	2	9	19	23	20
Belasitsa	17	5	4	8	12	18	19
Lok Sofia*	17	6	4	7	21	29	19
Pirin	17	4	6	7	15	24	18
Rodopa	17	5	3	9	14	24	18
Beroe	17	4	5	8	17	21	17
Naftex	17	4	4	9	13	22	16
Spartak Varna	17	5	1	11	16	43	16
Vidima-R'vski	17	4	4	9	20	31	16
Nesebar	17	3	4	10	14	32	13

**3pts deducted for non-payment of wages*

CROATIA

Feb 26: Slaven 4 Kamen Ingrad 1; Zadar 2 Medimurje 1; Varteks 0 Inter 1; Osijek 2 Hajduk 2; Rijeka 1 Pula 1; Dinamo 1 Zagreb 2.
Mar 5: Pula 2 Slaven 0; Medimurje 1 Dinamo 3; Zagreb 1 Osijek 0; Inter 2 Rijeka 2; Hajduk 3 Varteks 1.
Mar 6: Kamen Ingrad 2 Zadar 0.

CROATIA

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Hajduk	20	12	3	5	37	21	39
Rijeka	20	9	8	3	34	21	35
Inter	20	10	4	6	25	20	34
Varteks	20	10	1	9	38	28	31
Slaven	20	9	4	7	21	23	31
Dinamo	20	8	6	6	35	26	30
Zagreb	20	9	3	8	25	22	30
Kamen Ingrad	20	9	2	9	26	25	29
Osijek	20	7	8	5	28	29	29
Pula	20	5	7	8	19	23	22
Zadar	20	5	1	14	24	48	16
Medimurje	20	2	3	15	16	42	9

CZECH REPUBLIC

Feb 26: Slavia 3 Olomouc 2; Ceske Budejovice 0 Ostrava 1; Slovacko 1 Brno 2.
Feb 27: Teplice 1 Mlada Boleslav 1; Chmel Blsany 2 Zlin 0.
Feb 28: Opava 0 Sparta 1.
Mar 5: Sparta 4 Chmel Blsany 2.
Mar 7: Jablonec 1 Slovacko 1.

CZECH REPUBLIC

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Sparta	18	14	3	1	37	12	45
Slavia	17	9	4	4	25	14	31
Teplice	17	8	7	2	17	13	31
Jablonec	17	7	6	4	19	15	27
Olomouc	17	8	2	7	19	18	26
Liberec*	16	8	5	3	25	9	23
Ostrava	17	5	7	5	19	22	22
Zlin	17	5	6	6	18	21	21
Brno	17	5	4	8	14	24	19
Chmel Blsany	18	5	4	9	15	26	19
Drnovice	16	4	5	7	17	20	17
Mlada Boleslav	17	3	7	7	16	21	16
Pribram	16	4	3	9	15	29	15
Slovacko*	18	5	8	5	15	14	11
C Budejovice	17	2	5	10	14	21	11
Opava*	17	3	6	8	17	23	9

**Slovacko had 12pts deducted and Opava and Liberec 6pts for their part in a bribery scandal*

ENGLAND

Saturday, February 12
Birmingham 2 (Pandiani pen 38, Gray 45)
Liverpool 0 Att: 29,318

Blackburn 3 (Gamst Pedersen 17, Dickov pen 39, 62)
Norwich 0 Att: 20,923

Bolton 0
Middlesbrough 0 Att: 24,322

Everton 0
Chelsea 1 (Gudjohnsen 69) Att: 40,270

Portsmouth 1 (Aiyegbeni pen 24)
Aston Villa 2 (De Zeeuw og 17, Hitzlsperger 73) Att: 20,160

Sunday, February 13
Manchester City 0
Manchester Utd 2 (Rooney 68, Dunne og 75) Att: 47,111

Monday, February 14
Arsenal 5 (Bergkamp 31, Reyes 35, Henry 39, 77, Vieira 54)
Crystal Palace 1 (Johnson pen 63) Att: 38,056

Tuesday, February 22
West Bromwich 0
Southampton 0 Att: 25,865

Saturday, February 26
Aston Villa 1 (Solano 46)
Everton 3 (Osman 16, 67, Cahill 48) Att: 40,248

Crystal Palace 2 (Johnson pen 39, pen 68)
Birmingham 0 Att: 23,376

Continues on page 82

UEFA CHAMPIONS LEAGUE
1ST KNOCKOUT ROUND – THE DETAILS

BAYERN MUNICH V ARSENAL

- Bayern: no Ballack (injured)
- Arsenal: no Campbell (injured) or Bergkamp
- Bayern 1 Arsenal 0: poor Toure clearing header, volley in by Pizarro
- Bayern 2 Arsenal 0: Pizarro header from substitute Scholl's free-kick
- Bayern 3 Arsenal 0: Lehmann misjudged Frings' cross, Salihamidzic tap-in
- Bayern 3 Arsenal 1: Toure shot after Vieira hit post

RETURN LEG

- Arsenal: no Campbell or Cygan (injured)
- Bayern: no Makaay (injured)
- Bayern, playing with two forwards and with a strong performance from Ballack, pressed Arsenal, who struggled to find their passing rhythm
- Arsenal 1 Bayern 0: there was more urgency from Arsenal after the arrival of substitutes Pires and Fabregas. Henry controlled Cole's long pass, flashed shot past Kahn

Feb 22
Bayern Munich (Ger) 3 (Pizarro 3, 58, Salihamidzic 65)
Arsenal (Eng) 1 (Toure 88)
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 59,000. **Ref:** Milton Nielsen (Den)
Bayern: Kahn - Sagnol, Kovac, Lucio, Lizarazu, Demichelis, Salihamidzic (Hargreaves 75), Frings, Ze Roberto (Scholl 57), Makaay, Pizarro (Guerrero 67).
Arsenal: Lehmann - Lauren, Toure, Cygan, Clichy (Cole 82), Pires, Vieira, Edu (Flamini 35), Reyes, Ljungberg (Van Persie 76), Henry.

Mar 9
Arsenal 1 (Henry 66)
Bayern Munich 0
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 35,463. **Ref:** De Santis (Ita)
Bayern 3-2 on agg
Arsenal: Lehmann - Lauren, Toure, Senderos, Cole, Ljungberg (Van Persie 79), Vieira, Flamini (Fabregas 64), Reyes (Pires 64), Bergkamp, Henry.
Bayern: Kahn - Sagnol, Lucio, Kovac, Lizarazu, Demichelis, Salihamidzic (Hargreaves 90), Ballack, Deisler (Ze Roberto 73), Guerrero (Linke 84), Pizarro.

LIVERPOOL V BAYER LEVERKUSEN

- Liverpool: no Gerrard (suspended)
- Leverkusen: no Nowotny (injured)
- Liverpool 1 Leverkusen 0: Luis Garcia shot from Biscan pass
- Liverpool 2 Leverkusen 0: Riise free-kick curled over wall
- Liverpool 3 Leverkusen 0: Hamann free-kick in injury-time
- Liverpool 3 Leverkusen 1: Dudek spilled Berbatov shot, Franca tapped in

RETURN LEG

- Leverkusen: no Juan, Roque Junior, Freier, Ponte, Nowotny
- Liverpool: Gerrard back, Baros as lone striker in counter-attacking formation
- Leverkusen 0 Liverpool 1: Luis Garcia turned in Gerrard's cross
- Leverkusen 0 Liverpool 2: Luis Garcia redirected Biscan's header from Gerrard corner
- Berbatov early departure (injured)
- Leverkusen 0 Liverpool 3: Baros powerful shot
- Leverkusen 1 Liverpool 3: Krzynowek late consolation, low shot after Placente lay-off

Feb 22
Liverpool (Eng) 3 (Luis Garcia 15, Riise 35, Hamann 90)
Bayer Leverkusen (Ger) 1 (Franca 90)
HT: 2-0. **Att:** 40,942. **Ref:** Vassaras (Gre)
Liverpool: Dudek - Finnan, Carragher, Hyypia, Traore, Luis Garcia, Hamann, Biscan, Riise (Smicer 89), Baros (Potter 86), Kewell (Le Tallec 77).
Leverkusen: Butt - Schneider, Callsen-Bracker, Juan, Placente, Ramelow, Freier (Bierofka 83), Ponte (Donovan 69), Krzynowek, Berbatov, Voronin (Franca 67).

Mar 9
Bayer Leverkusen 1 (Krzynowek 88)
Liverpool 3 (Luis Garcia 28, 32, Baros 67)
HT: 0-2. **Att:** 22,500. **Ref:** Sars (Fra)
Liverpool 6-2 on agg
Leverkusen: Butt - Schneider, Callsen-Bracker, Ramelow (Castro 70), Placente, Babic, Bierofka, Donovan (Fritz 53), Krzynowek, Franca, Berbatov (Voronin 32).
Liverpool: Dudek - Finnan (Nunez 76), Hyypia, Carragher (Welsh 71), Warnock, Luis Garcia, Hamann (Smicer 63), Biscan, Riise, Gerrard, Baros.

PSV EINDHOVEN V MONACO

- Monaco: no Squillaci or Chevanton (injured)
- PSV 1 Monaco 0: early goal from Alex, a downward header past Roma from Van Bommel corner, but PSV prevented from adding to it by Monaco's stout defending
- Second half: Saviola turn and shot over and Kallon header over were Monaco's best chances

RETURN LEG

- Monaco: Chevanton started first game of 2005 alongside Saviola, with Kallon moving to right midfield; Squillaci still injured
- PSV unchanged
- Monaco 0 PSV 1: first goal against the run of play, Vennegoor near-post header unmarked from Cocu corner
- Monaco 0 PSV 2: substitute Adebayor gave Monaco a three-man attack but PSV sub Beasley added a second, turning in Park's low cross from left

Feb 22
PSV Eindhoven (Hol) 1 (Alex 8)
Monaco (Fra) 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 31,225. **Ref:** Medina Cantalejo (Spa)
PSV: Gomes - Alex, Bouma, Ooijer, Lee, Vogel, Cocu, Van Bommel, Vennegoor of Hesselink, Park, Farfan (Beasley 52).
Monaco: Roma - Givet, Rodriguez, Evra, Maicon, Bernardi, Plasil, Zikos, Kallon, Saviola, Adebayor (Nonda 82).

Mar 9
Monaco 0
PSV Eindhoven 2 (Vennegoor of Hesselink 27, Beasley 69)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 15,523. **Ref:** Bennett (Eng)
PSV 3-0 on agg
Monaco: Roma - Rodriguez, Maicon, Evra, Givet, Bernardi, Zikos, Plasil (Adebayor 60), Kallon, Saviola (Nonda 72), Chevanton. *Sent off: Givet 76min.*
PSV: Gomes - Ooijer, Alex, Bouma, Lee, Cocu, Vogel, Van Bommel, Farfan (Robert 79), Park, Vennegoor of Hesselink (Beasley 67).

REAL MADRID V JUVENTUS

- Madrid: Ronaldo preferred to Owen; Gravesen preferred to Guti
- Juventus: no Trezeguet (flu)
- Real Madrid 1 Juventus 0: Beckham free-kick, Helguera header
- Nedved off injured after clash of heads with Raul Bravo
- Casillas valuable saves from Olivera and Emerson

RETURN LEG

- Juventus: no Nedved (injured), Blasi (suspended)
- Real Madrid: no Salgado (injured)
- Juventus started with three-man attack
- Juventus 1 Real Madrid 0: deep cross from Camoranesi on right, headed back by Ibrahimovic, acrobatic overhead volley by Trezeguet past Casillas
- Tacchinardi and Ronaldo sent off after clash in which Ronaldo kicked out
- Juventus 2 Real Madrid 0: Zalayeta low shot inside post after poor Roberto Carlos clearance

Feb 22
Real Madrid (Spa) 1 (Ivan Helguera 31)
Juventus (Ita) 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 78,000. **Ref:** Michel (Slk)
Real Madrid: Casillas - Michel Salgado (Raul Bravo 9), Ivan Helguera, Samuel, Roberto Carlos, Beckham, Gravesen, Zidane, Figo, Raul, Ronaldo (Owen 75).
Juventus: Buffon - Zebina, Thuram, Cannavaro, Zambrotta, Camoranesi, Blasi (Tacchinardi 68), Emerson, Nedved (Olivera 36), Del Piero (Zalayeta 80), Ibrahimovic.

Mar 9
Juventus 2 (Trezeguet 75, Zalayeta 117)
Real Madrid 0
Aet. **HT:** 0-0. **90mins:** 1-0. **Att:** 58,956.
Ref: Merk (Ger)
Juventus 2-1 on agg
Juventus: Buffon - Zebina, Thuram, Cannavaro, Zambrotta, Camoranesi, Emerson, Pessotto (Tacchinardi 66), Zalayeta (Olivera 119), Ibrahimovic, Del Piero (Trezeguet 56). *Sent off: Tacchinardi 113min.*
Real Madrid: Casillas - Raul Bravo, Ivan Helguera, Samuel, Roberto Carlos, Beckham (Solari 77), Gravesen, Figo, Zidane (Guti 74), Ronaldo, Raul (Owen 95). *Sent off: Ronaldo 113min.*

BARCELONA V CHELSEA

- Barcelona: no Edmilson (injured)
- Chelsea: no Robben (injured); coach Mourinho sprung surprise by starting Duff rather than Gudjohnsen
- Barcelona 0 Chelsea 1: Lampard ball over Barca defence released Duff, whose cross from right was turned into goal by Belletti
- Drogba had chance to put Chelsea 2-0, ahead but shot wide when clean through
- Chelsea in control until sending-off of Drogba for a controversial second yellow card for high tackle on Valdes
- Barcelona 1 Chelsea 1: Lopez made immediate impact as sub, turning past Gallas and scoring with his first shot on goal
- Barcelona 2 Chelsea 1: Eto'o first to react to miscued shot by Lopez, shot past Cech

RETURN LEG

- Chelsea: no Drogba (suspended); attacking formation for Chelsea, with Kezman and Gudjohnsen in attack; Tiago dropped
- Barcelona: no Marquez (injured), Iniesta preferred to Giuly
- Early possession with Barcelona, but Chelsea hit them with astonishingly effective counter-attack, scoring three times in first 19 mins
- Chelsea 1 Barcelona 0: Xavi slip enabled Lampard to feed Kezman, whose cross from right was met by Gudjohnsen, who turned ball past Valdes
- Chelsea 2 Barcelona 0: Lampard atoned for earlier miss from corner by turning in loose ball after Valdes had parried Cole's shot
- Chelsea 3 Barcelona 0: Kezman and Cole exchanged passes to play in unmarked Duff, who shot past Valdes

- Brilliant Ronaldinho pass played in Eto'o, but his volley tipped over
- Chelsea 3 Barcelona 1: Barca let back into game by controversial penalty, Ferreira adjudged to have handled Belletti's cross. Ronaldinho converted, just beating Cech
- Chelsea 3 Barcelona 2: brilliant Ronaldinho shot from standing position, fooled everyone with lack of backlift in shot
- Second half: Eto'o blasted over from close range after mistake by Johnson
- Chelsea 4 Barcelona 2: Terry header from Duff corner. Barca protests that keeper Valdes was impeded by Carvalho ignored

Feb 23
Barcelona (Spa) 2 (Lopez 66, Eto'o 73)
Chelsea (Eng) 1 (Belletti og 33)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 96,650. **Ref:** Frisk (Swe)
Barcelona: Valdes - Belletti (Gerard 84), Marquez, Puyol, Van Bronckhorst, Albertini (Iniesta 56), Deco, Xavi, Giuly (Lopez 63), Eto'o, Ronaldinho.
Chelsea: Cech - Paulo Ferreira, Ricardo Carvalho, Terry, Gallas, Tiago (Smertin 89), Makelele, Lampard, J Cole (Johnson 69), Drogba, Duff (Gudjohnsen 75). *Sent off: Drogba 56min.*

Mar 8
Chelsea 4 (Gudjohnsen 8, Lampard 17, Duff 19, Terry 76)
Barcelona 2 (Ronaldinho pen 27, 38)
HT: 3-2. **Att:** 41,515. **Ref:** Collina (Ita)
Chelsea 5-4 on agg
Chelsea: Cech - Paulo Ferreira (Johnson 50), Ricardo Carvalho, Terry, Gallas, J Cole, Makelele, Lampard, Duff (Huth 86), Gudjohnsen (Tiago 78), Kezman.
Barcelona: Valdes - Belletti (Giuly 84), Puyol, Oleguer, Van Bronckhorst (Silvinho 46), Xavi, Gerard, Deco, Iniesta (Lopez 86), Eto'o, Ronaldinho.

MANCHESTER UNITED V MILAN

- Man United: Van Nistelrooy, returning from injury, on bench
- Milan: no Shevchenko (injured), Stam injured in warm-up
- Goalless first half: Seedorf hit bar; Scholes shot wide from Fortune cross and Fortune shot wide after Giggs run
- Man United 0 Milan 1: Crespo pounced on loose ball spilled by Carroll after Seedorf shot

RETURN LEG

- Milan: no Shevchenko (injured)
- Man United: Van Nistelrooy starts
- First half: Kaka went closest with volley against bar
- Milan 1 Man United 0: With Giggs off injured, Cafu had more space down right flank, put in deep cross for Crespo, whose header looped over Howard

Feb 23
Manchester United (Eng) 0
Milan (Ita) 1 (Crespo 78)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 67,162. **Ref:** Mejuto Gonzalez (Spa)
Man Utd: Carroll - G Neville (Silvestre 80), Ferdinand, Brown, Heinze, Cristiano Ronaldo (Van Nistelrooy 62), Scholes, Keane, Fortune (Saha 80), Giggs, Rooney.
Milan: Dida - Cafu (Costacurta 86), Nesta, Maldini, Kaladze, Gattuso, Pirlo (Ambrosini 84), Seedorf, Rui Costa, Kaka (Serginho 90), Crespo.

Mar 8
Milan 1 (Crespo 61)
Manchester United 0
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 79,103. **Ref:** Fandel (Ger)
Milan 2-0 on agg
Milan: Dida - Cafu, Nesta, Stam, Maldini, Gattuso (Costacurta 89), Pirlo, Seedorf, Rui Costa (Dhorasoo 85), Kaka, Crespo (Ambrosini 78).
Man Utd: Howard - Brown (Smith 85), Ferdinand, Silvestre, Heinze, Cristiano Ronaldo, Scholes, Keane, Giggs (Fortune 56), Rooney, Van Nistelrooy.

FC PORTO V INTER

- Porto: no Diego or Jorge Costa (both suspended)
- Inter: no Davids or Recoba (rested), Vieri back from injury but on bench
- Porto 0 Inter 1: Inter were the stronger side and took lead through Martins, who tapped in after Stankovic's run on the left
- Porto 1 Inter 1: against the run of play, Nuno Valente's cross from left was missed by Toldo, played back in by Costinha, turned in by Ricardo Costa

Feb 23
FC Porto (Por) 1 (Ricardo Costa 60)
Internazionale (Ita) 1 (Martins 23)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 38,177. **Ref:** Poll (Eng)
FC Porto: Vitor Baia - Seitaridis, Ricardo Costa, Pedro Emanuel, Nuno Valente, Raul Meireles, Costinha, Bosingwa (Luis Fabiano 27), Maniche, Ricardo Quaresma (Helder Postiga 82), McCarthy.
Inter: Toldo - J Zanetti, Cordoba, Materazzi, Favalli, Veron (Emre 70), C Zanetti, Cambiasso, Stankovic, Martins, Adriano (Vieri 80).

Inter v FC Porto 2nd leg - Mar 15

WERDER BREMEN V LYON

- Werder: no Klasnic (injured), Baumann (suspended)
- Lyon: no Cacapa or Reveillere (injured)
- Werder 0 Lyon 1: Malouda break down right, Frau missed ball, Wiltord tap-in
- Werder attacks: Coupet saved well from Klose and Ismael headed over. Even with Werder switching to 4-3-3 Lyon held out
- Werder 0 Lyon 2: Diarra beat Reinke with vicious shot from edge of area
- Werder 0 Lyon 3: Juninho trademark free-kick from 30m

RETURN LEG

- Lyon: cautious formation with Abidal moved to central defence, Essien into midfield.
- Werder started with three forwards – Klasnic, Klose and Valdez; Baumann back from suspension
- Lyon 1 Werder 0: Werder attacks left them vulnerable. Wiltord, from Malouda's pass, shot inside far post
- Lyon 2 Werder 0: Govou cut in from the right and fed ball to Wiltord, dummy to Essien, fierce shot
- Lyon 3 Werder 0: Essien run through Werder defence to shoot past Reinke
- Lyon 3 Werder 1: Micoud seized on Cris mistake to fire home
- Lyon 4 Werder 1: Wiltord shot over Reinke from Govou pass
- Lyon 4 Werder 2: Ismael penalty after foul on Ernst by Diatta
- Lyon 5 Werder 2: Malouda run from right, low shot inside near post from edge of area
- Lyon 6 Werder 2: Wiltord converted Govou's cross
- Lyon 7 Werder 2: Berthod penalty after Nilmar fouled by Fahrenhorst

Feb 23
Werder Bremen (Ger) 0
Lyon (Fra) 3 (Wiltord 9, Diarra 77, Juninho 80)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 36,923. **Ref:** De Bleeckere (Blg)
Werder: Reinke - Stalteri, Ismael, Pasanen, Magnin, Ernst, Jensen, Borowski (Hunt 61), Micoud, Klose, Haedo Valdez.
Lyon: Coupet - Diatta, Cris, Essien, Abidal, Diarra, Juninho, Govou (Ben Arfa 88), Malouda, Wiltord (Clement 77), Frau (Nilmar 63).

Mar 8
Lyon 7 (Wiltord 8, 54, 63, Essien 17, 29, Malouda 60, Berthod pen 78)
Werder Bremen 2 (Micoud 31, Ismael pen 57)
HT: 3-1. **Att:** 38,922. **Ref:** Ivanov (Rus)
Lyon 10-2 on agg
Lyon: Coupet - Diatta, Cris (Clement 63), Abidal, Berthod, Essien, Diarra, Juninho, Govou (Frau 74), Wiltord (Nilmar 68), Malouda.
Werder: Reinke - Stalteri (Umit 76), Ismael, Pasanen, Magnin, Baumann, Micoud, Ernst, Klose (Borowski 46), Klasnic (Fahrenhorst 69), Haedo Valdez.

Slip, sliding away...Giggs is tackled by Gattuso during Man Utd's 1-0 loss to Milan at San Siro

Manchester Utd 2 (Rooney 8, 81)
Portsmouth 1 (O'Neil 47) Att: 67,989

Southampton 1 (Crouch 65)
Arsenal 1 (Ljungberg 45) Att: 31,815

Tottenham 2 (Kanoute 78, Keane 90)
Fulham 0 Att: 35,885

Sunday, February 27
Middlesbrough 2 (Riggott 74, Graham 86)
Charlton 2 (Holland 14, Bartlett 80) Att: 29,603

Newcastle 2 (Bowyer 35, Dyer 69)
Bolton 1 (Giannakopoulos 41) Att: 50,430

Monday, February 28
Norwich 2 (Ashton 12, McKenzie 16)
Manchester City 3 (Sibierski 25, Fowler 37, 90) Att: 24,302

Saturday, March 5
Arsenal 3 (Henry 39, 53, 85)
Portsmouth 0 Att: 38,079

Aston Villa 2 (Laursen 64, L Moore 78)
Middlesbrough 0 Att: 34,201

Crystal Palace 0
Manchester Utd 0 Att: 26,021

Fulham 0
Charlton 0 Att: 18,290

Newcastle 1 (Robert 70)
Liverpool 0 Att: 52,323

Norwich 1 (McKenzie 64)
Chelsea 3 (J Cole 22, Kezman 71, Ricardo Carvalho 79) Att: 24,506

Southampton 1 (Quashie 51)
Tottenham 0 Att: 31,903

Sunday, March 6
Everton 0
Blackburn 1 (Stead 72) Att: 32,406

West Bromwich 2 (Clement 53, Campbell 64)
Birmingham 0 Att: 25,749

Monday, March 7
Manchester City 0
Bolton 1 (Diouf 45) Att: 43,050

ENGLAND

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Chelsea	28	22	5	1	53	9	71
Man Utd	29	18	9	2	47	17	63
Arsenal	29	18	7	4	67	32	61
Everton	29	15	6	8	34	30	51
Liverpool	28	13	4	11	41	30	43
Bolton	29	12	7	10	37	34	43
Middlesbrough	29	11	9	9	43	39	42
Charlton	28	11	7	10	32	38	40
Tottenham	28	11	6	11	35	31	39
Aston Villa	29	10	8	11	34	37	38
Newcastle	28	9	10	9	40	44	37
Man City	29	9	9	11	34	32	36
Birmingham	29	8	8	13	31	37	32
Blackburn	28	7	10	11	25	36	31
Fulham	28	8	6	14	33	46	30
Portsmouth	29	8	6	15	31	45	30
Crystal Palace	29	6	8	15	32	45	26
Southampton	29	4	12	13	30	44	24
West Brom	28	3	12	13	25	49	21
Norwich	29	3	11	15	29	58	20

LEADING GOALSCORERS
22 Thierry Henry (Arsenal)
18 Andy Johnson (Crystal Palace)
11 Jermain Defoe (Tottenham)

FA CUP – 4th rnd (last 32)

Replays
Feb 12: Fulham 4 Derby 2; Hartlepool 0 Brentford 1; Tottenham 3 West Bromwich 1.
Feb 13: Sheffield Utd 1 West Ham 1 (aet; Sheffield Utd 3-1 on pens).

5th rnd (last 16)

Feb 19: Arsenal 1 Sheffield Utd 1; Bolton 1 Fulham 0; Charlton 1 Leicester 2; Everton 0 Manchester Utd 2; Southampton 2 Brentford 2.
Feb 20: Burnley 0 Blackburn 0; Newcastle 1 Chelsea 0; Tottenham 1 Nottingham Forest 1.

Replays
Mar 1: Blackburn 2 Burnley 1; Brentford 1 Southampton 3; Sheffield Utd 0 Arsenal 0 (aet; Arsenal 4-2 on pens).
Mar 2: Nottingham Forest 0 Tottenham 3.

LEAGUE CUP – Final

Feb 27 - Millennium stadium, Cardiff
Liverpool 2 (Riise 1, Nunez 113)
Chelsea 3 (Gerrard og 79, Drogba 107, Kezman 112)
Aet. **HT:** 1-0. **90mins:** 1-1. **Att:** 78,000.
Ref: Bennett

ESM GOLDEN SHOE STANDINGS AT 06.03.05

POS	NAME	TEAM	GOALS	FACTOR	PTS
1	Thierry Henry	Arsenal (Eng)	22	2	44
2	Marek Mintal	Nurnberg (Ger)	19	2	38
	Vincenzo Montella	Roma (Ita)	19	2	38
4	Samuel Eto'o	Barcelona (Spa)	18	2	36
	Andy Johnson	Crystal Palace (Eng)	18	2	36
6	Diego Forlan	Villarreal (Spa)	16	2	32
7	Dirk Kuijt	Feyenoord (Hol)	21	1.5	31.5
8	Adriano	Internazionale (Ita)	15	2	30
	Fatih Tekke	Trabzonspor (Tur)	20	1.5	30
	Liedson	Sporting Lisbon (Por)	20	1.5	30
	Ricardo Oliveira	Betis (Spa)	15	2	30
12	Tomasz Frankowski	Wisla Krakow (Pol)	19	1.5	28.5
	Frode Johnsen	Rosenborg (Nor)	19	1.5	28.5
14	Delron Buckley	Arminia Bielefeld (Ger)	14	2	28
	Fernando Torres	Atletico Madrid (Spa)	14	2	28
	Alberto Gilardino	Parma (Ita)	14	2	28
	Andrii Shevchenko	Milan (Ita)	14	2	28
	Vjatseslav Zahhovaiko	Flora Tallinn (Est)	28	1	28

For the latest standings, updated weekly, visit www.worldsoccer.com

FRANCE

Friday, February 18
Monaco 1 (Rodriguez 84)
Lyon 1 (Clement 90) Att: 17,188

Saturday, February 19
Bastia 0
Marseille 1 (Pedretti 62) Att: 6,591

Caen 2 (Mazure 11, 28)
Ajaccio 2 (Andre Luiz 10, Waldir Lucas Pereira 30) Att: 17,936

Lens 2 (Cousin 24, Carriere 75)
Nantes 0 Att: 31,798

Rennes 4 (Maoulida 48, 78, Frei 63, Monterrubio 75)
Nice 1 (Balmont 61) Att: 16,535

Strasbourg 3 (Niang 20, Pagis pen 37, Abdessadki 63)
Paris SG 1 (Lacour og 86) Att: 16,987

Toulouse 1 (Moreira 80)
Bordeaux 0 Att: 22,256

Sunday, February 20
Istres 1 (Bakayoko pen 25)
Auxerre 0 Att: 8,000

Metz 1 (Obraniak pen 50)
Lille 1 (Acimovic 7) Att: 20,000

Saint-Etienne 1 (Feindouno pen 60)
Sochaux 0 Att: 25,000

Saturday, February 26
Ajaccio 0
Lens 0 Att: 3,527

Bordeaux 2 (Chamakh 22, Darcheville 58)
Caen 2 (Mazure 69, Deroin 78) Att: 16,921

Lyon 3 (Wiltord 45, Malouda 47, Frau 49)
Saint-Etienne 2 (Feindouno 56, Compan 90) Att: 38,915

Nantes 2 (Keseru 45, Quint 54)
Strasbourg 1 (Niang 49) Att: 25,087

Nice 2 (Balmont 13, Ederson 66)
Monaco 1 (Gigliotti 58) Att: 12,775

Paris SG 1 (Benachour pen 65)
Bastia 0 Att: 35,000

Sunday, February 27
Lille 0
Rennes 0 Att: 18,000

Marseille 1 (Batlles 56)
Istres 1 (N'Diaye 49) Att: 50,000

Friday, March 4
Caen 1 (Mazure 72)
Lyon 0 Att: 20,649

Saturday, March 5
Bastia 3 (Hadji 22, Ziani 29, Rocchi 40)
Lille 1 (Debuchy 19) Att: 3,720

Istres 0
Bordeaux 1 (Uche 80) Att: 5,825

Lens 3 (Thomert 2, Utaka 76, 82)
Auxerre 1 (Gonzales 88) Att: 32,187

Monaco 0
Metz 0 Att: 8,075

Paris SG 1 (Pauleta 89)
Nantes 0 Att: 33,737

Rennes 3 (Frei 5, 89, Kallstrom 13)
Sochaux 0 Att: 23,472

Strasbourg 1 (Devaux 35)
Ajaccio 0 Att: 19,873

Toulouse 1 (Moreira 37)
Nice 0 Att: 15,161

Sunday, March 6
Saint-Etienne 2 (Feindouno pen 36, Hellebuyck 83)
Marseille 0 Att: 35,000

FRANCE

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Lyon	28	15	11	2	39	16	56
Marseille	28	14	6	8	35	26	48
Lille	28	12	11	5	32	20	47
Monaco	27	11	12	4	36	23	45
Auxerre	27	12	6	9	37	30	42
Toulouse	27	11	8	8	28	26	41
Rennes	28	11	6	11	33	31	39
Lens	28	9	11	8	30	26	38
Saint-Etienne	27	8	13	6	34	25	37
Bordeaux	28	7	15	6	29	25	36
Paris SG	28	8	12	8	28	31	36
Sochaux	27	9	8	10	30	27	35
Nice	28	7	11	10	32	40	32
Metz	27	7	11	9	23	32	32
Strasbourg	27	7	9	11	31	34	30
Nantes	28	7	9	12	22	28	30
Caen	28	6	11	11	23	46	29
Bastia	28	6	8	14	21	34	26
Ajaccio	27	4	13	10	20	29	25
Istres	28	3	13	12	16	30	22

LEADING GOALSCORERS
12 Alexander Frei (Rennes)
12 Mickael Pagis (Strasbourg)
11 Mohamed Kallon (Monaco)
11 Pauleta (Paris SG)

FRENCH CUP – last 32

Feb 11: Nice 3 Reims 1 (aet).
Feb 12: Albi 2 Angers 0 (aet); Boulogne-sur-Mer 4 Blois 0; Clermont Foot 1 Toulon 0; Libourne/Saint-Seurin 2 Monaco 4; Lille 3 Lens 2; Metz 0 Sochaux 1; Nimes 1 Ajaccio 1 (aet; Nimes 4-2 on pens); Rennes 2 Caen 0; Rhone-Vallee 1 Grenoble 2; Romorantin 0 Quevilly 1; Saumur 0 Nantes 2; Sedan 4 Montagnarde 0; Vannes 0 Auxerre 2.
Feb 13: Paris SG 3 Bordeaux 1 (aet); Toulouse 1 Lyon 2.

Last 16

Mar 1: Clermont Foot 1 Lyon 1 (aet; Clermont Foot 4-3 on pens); Nimes 4 Nice 0; Sedan 2 Quevilly 0.
Mar 2: Albi 0 Sochaux 3; Auxerre 3 Paris SG 2; Lille 1 Grenoble 3 (aet); Rennes 0 Monaco 1 (aet).

Boulogne-sur-Mer v Nantes - Mar 16

GERMANY

Saturday, February 12
Borussia Dortmund 1 (Koller 21)
Bochum 0 Att: 75,500

Freiburg 0
Hannover 0 Att: 20,000

Hamburg 2 (Barbarez 17, Van Buyten 54)
Stuttgart 1 (Szabics 15) Att: 48,214

Hertha 2 (Kovac pen 30, Wichniarek 90)
Nurnberg 1 (Mintal 79) Att: 38,518

Kaiserslautern 2 (Seitz 5, Zandi 51)
Hansa Rostock 1 (Prica 83) Att: 31,000

Schalke 3 (Asamoah 13, Sand 35, Hanke 85)
Wolfsburg 0 Att: 61,524

Werder Bremen 2 (Hunt 29, Zidan 88)
Monchengladbach 0 Att: 40,566

Sunday, February 13
Arminia Bielefeld 3 (Porcello 23, Buckley 61, 83)
Bayern Munich 1 (Lucio 80) Att: 26,601

Bayer Leverkusen 2 (Freier 64, Krzynowek 69)
Mainz 0 Att: 22,500

Saturday, February 19
Bayern Munich 5 (Salihamidzic 5, Makaay 6, 34, 54, Pizarro 28)
Borussia Dortmund 0 Att: 53,000

Bochum 3 (Misimovic pen 35, Kalla 56, Bechman 84)
Freiburg 1 (Aogo 81) Att: 22,820

Hamburg 2 (Takahara 29, Da Silva Moreira 40)
Kaiserslautern 1 (Altintop 52) Att: 50,916

Hannover 1 (Zuraw 38)
Werder Bremen 4 (Magnin 5, Borowski 7, Ernst 62, Zidan 85) Att: 41,862

Mainz 0
Arminia Bielefeld 0 Att: 20,300

Nurnberg 2 (Mintal 30, 53)
Bayer Leverkusen 4 (Berbatov 3, 60, Ramelow 33, Krzynowek 79) Att: 20,216

Wolfsburg 4 (D'Alessandro 4, Klimowicz 7, Thiam 63, Maric 83)
Hansa Rostock 0 Att: 17,836

Sunday, February 20
Monchengladbach 1 (Bohme pen 38)
Schalke 3 (Ailton 44, 66, 79) Att: 53,148

Stuttgart 1 (Cacau 10)
Hertha 0 Att: 29,000

Saturday, February 26
Arminia Bielefeld 3 (Buckley 6, Owomoyela 19, Pinto 72)
Nurnberg 1 (Mintal 31) Att: 16,462

Borussia Dortmund 3 (Smolarek 28, Koller 54, Ricken 74)
Mainz 0 Att: 73,500

Freiburg 0
Bayern Munich 1 (Deisler 52) Att: 25,000

Hansa Rostock 0
Monchengladbach 0 Att: 15,400

Hertha 4 (Reina 4, Gilberto 16, 81, Marcelinho 31)
Hamburg 1 (Barbarez 78) Att: 40,399

Kaiserslautern 0
Wolfsburg 0 Att: 31,033

Werder Bremen 4 (Ismael 45, Baumann 49, Haedo Valdez 53, Micoud 73)
Bochum 0 Att: 37,492

Sunday, February 27
Bayer Leverkusen 1 (Berbatov 80)
Stuttgart 1 (Cacau 89) Att: 22,500

Schalke 1 (Hanke 65)
Hannover 0 Att: 61,524

Saturday, March 5
Bayern Munich 1 (Ballack 7)
Werder Bremen 0 Att: 53,000

Bochum 0
Schalke 2 (Ailton 30, Lincoln 77) Att: 32,645

Hamburg 1 (Van Buyten 21)
Bayer Leverkusen 0 Att: 43,959

Hannover 0
Hansa Rostock 1 (Prica 28) Att: 26,434

Mainz 5 (Gerber 23, Friedrich 26, Babatz pen 43, Da Silva 71, Thurk 82)
Freiburg 0 Att: 20,300

Monchengladbach 1 (Sverkos 87)
Wolfsburg 0 Att: 43,526

Stuttgart 2 (Soldo 48, Cacau 74)
Arminia Bielefeld 1 (Boakye 76) Att: 28,000

Sunday, March 6
Hertha 1 (Madlung 85)
Kaiserslautern 1 (Mettomo 50) Att: 35,814

Nurnberg 2 (Mintal 76, Vittek pen 89)
Borussia Dortmund 2 (Worns 62, Rosicky pen 86) Att: 28,106

GERMANY

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Bayern Munich	24	15	5	4	46	23	50
Schalke	24	16	2	6	39	27	50
Werder Bremen	24	13	4	7	53	27	43
Stuttgart	24	12	6	6	43	30	42
Hertha	24	10	10	4	40	21	40
Hamburg	24	13	1	10	41	36	40
B Leverkusen	24	11	6	7	42	31	39
Wolfsburg	24	11	1	12	39	36	34
Kaiserslautern	24	9	6	9	32	32	33
Hannover	24	9	5	10	27	28	32
B Dortmund	24	8	8	8	29	32	32
A Bielefeld	24	9	5	10	27	30	32
M'gladbach	24	7	7	10	27	38	28
Mainz	24	7	5	12	32	40	26
Nurnberg	24	6	7	11	40	45	25
Bochum	24	4	7	13	29	50	19
Hansa Rostock	24	3	8	13	19	47	17
Freiburg	24	3	7	14	18	50	16

LEADING GOALSCORERS
19 Marek Mintal (Nurnberg)
14 Delron Buckley (Arminia Bielefeld)

GERMAN CUP – quarter-finals

Mar 1: Arminia Bielefeld 1 Hansa Rostock 0; Bayern Munich amateurs 0 Werder Bremen 3; Schalke 3 Hannover 1.
Mar 2: Freiburg 0 Bayern Munich 7.

GREECE

Feb 12: Aris 1 Ergotelis 1; Olympiakos 0 Xanthi 0; Panathinaikos 5 Apollon 1.
Feb 13: Ionikos 1 Aigaleo 1; Iraklis 1 PAOK 0; Kallithea 3 Halkidona 1; OFI 3 Kerkira 1; Panionios 1 AEK 1.
Feb 19: AEK 2 Iraklis 1; Kerkira 2 Ionikos 2; Xanthi 4 Apollon 1.
Feb 20: Aigaleo 0 Panathinaikos 1; Halkidona 1 Aris 0; Ergotelis 2 Olympiakos 1; PAOK 3 Kallithea 1; Panionios 2 OFI 1.
Feb 26: Ionikos 0 Panionios 0; Kallithea 1 AEK 2; Apollon 1 Aigaleo 1.
Feb 27: Panathinaikos 1 Kerkira 0; Olympiakos 3 Halkidona 0; Iraklis 1 OFI 0; Aris 1 PAOK 3; Ergotelis 0 Xanthi 2.
Mar 5: OFI 1 Kallithea 1.
Mar 6: PAOK 1 Olympiakos 1; AEK 1 Aris 0; Panionios 0 Panathinaikos 1; Halkidona 2 Ergotelis 0; Iraklis 2 Ionikos 0; Kerkira 0 Apollon 2; Xanthi 2 Aigaleo 0.

GREECE

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Olympiakos	21	13	6	2	38	12	45
Panathinaikos	21	14	3	4	36	12	45
AEK	21	12	8	1	31	16	44
Xanthi	21	11	6	4	34	21	39
PAOK	21	9	5	7	30	27	32
Halkidona	21	7	7	7	20	21	28
Iraklis	21	8	4	9	20	21	28
Aigaleo	21	5	11	5	18	18	26
Panionios	21	6	7	8	14	18	25
OFI	21	6	6	9	27	30	24
Kallithea	21	5	8	8	30	33	23
Ionikos	21	4	8	9	14	27	20
Aris	21	3	10	8	17	25	19
Apollon	21	4	7	10	18	34	19
Ergotelis	21	5	4	12	17	35	19
Kerkira	21	3	6	12	15	29	15

HOLLAND

Friday, February 11
Groningen 0
Vitesse 0 Att: 12,350

Saturday, February 12
AZ 0
PSV 0 Att: 8,683

RBC 0
Utrecht 1 (Tiendalli 74) Att: 4,750

Roda JC 2 (Cisse 62, Kah 87)
Heerenveen 3 (Vayrynen 15, 55, Nilsson 78) Att: 12,535

Twente 3 (Touma 8, N'Kufo 39, Majstorovic 69)
RKC 1 (Fuchs 7) Att: 13,100

Sunday, February 13
Den Bosch 0
De Graafschap 2 (Van Beukering 70, Berck Beelenkamp 90) Att: 6,370

Feyenoord 7 (Gibbs 23, Hofs 27, 43, 61, Kuijt pen 40, 52, Bruno Basto 88)
Willem II 0 Att: 34,700

NAC 1 (Cornelisse 56)
Ajax 2 (Boukhari 3, 88) Att: 15,103

NEC 1 (Niedzielan 20)
Den Haag 1 (Stroeve 65) Att: 11,500

Friday, February 18
RBC 2 (De Groot 58, Hammond 90)
Willem II 0 Att: 4,950

Saturday, February 19
PSV 4 (Park 21, Beasley 45, Vennegoor of Hesselink 71, Ooijer 77)
NEC 1 (Boutahar 55) Att: 30,800

Sunday, February 20
Ajax 2 (De Ridder 90, Boukhari 90)
Den Bosch 0 Att: 49,619

AZ 1 (De Cler 26)
Roda JC 1 (Kah 32) Att: 8,290

De Graafschap 2 (Van Beukering 48, 77)
Heerenveen 1 (Rose 74) Att: 11,000

Groningen 0
Twente 1 (N'Kufo 14) Att: 11,645

RKC 1 (Hoogendorp 12)
NAC 0 Att: 4,500

Utrecht 0
Feyenoord 2 (Castelen 10, Kuijt 57) Att: 22,500

Vitesse 3 (Janssen 20, 57, Gluscevic 90)
Den Haag 4 (Den Ouden 42, 63, Stroeve 70, Van der Gun 76) Att: 18,200

Friday, February 25
NEC 1 (Ebbinge 10)
RKC 0 Att: 11,500

Saturday, February 26
NAC 1 (Peto 7)
Groningen 4 (Nevland 15, Van Gessel 62, Seedorf 71, Krstev 84) Att: 12,316

Twente 0
De Graafschap 0 Att: 13,150

Sunday, February 27
Den Bosch 1 (Schulp 46)
Vitesse 2 (Jansen 42, Knopper 83) Att: 5,378

Den Haag 1 (Edson 85)
Utrecht 0 Att: 5,413

Feyenoord 3 (Kuijt 26, Kalou 80, Ono 83)
RBC 0 Att: 33,500

Heerenveen 0
PSV 3 (Park 39, Farfan 82, 90) Att: 19,500

Roda JC 1 (Cristiano 64)
Ajax 2 (Haristeas 33, Escude 42) Att: 17,500

Willem II 1 (Ceesay 27)
AZ 3 (Van Galen 45, 69, Lindenbergh 55) Att: 13,000

Friday, March 4
RBC 1 (Smolders 52)
NEC 0 Att: 5,000

Saturday, March 5
RKC 2 (Hoogendorp 15, Vermaelen 68)
Utrecht 2 (Mols 39, Douglas 42) Att: 5,700

Vitesse 2 (Knopper 29, Gluscevic 83)
Willem II 0 Att: 18,502

Sunday, March 6
De Graafschap 0
NAC 2 (Diba 27, 60) Att: 11,000

Roda JC 1 (Kone 15)
Twente 2 (Shoukov 50, N'Kufo 58) Att: 12,185

HOLLAND

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
PSV	23	18	4	1	61	13	58
AZ	23	16	6	1	53	16	54
Ajax	23	15	5	3	50	21	50
Feyenoord	23	13	5	5	62	27	44
Vitesse	24	12	4	8	41	32	40
Utrecht	24	10	6	8	28	26	36
Twente	24	10	5	9	30	28	35
Heerenveen	23	10	5	8	38	40	35
RKC	24	8	7	9	30	33	31
Roda JC	24	8	6	10	41	39	30
NAC	24	8	6	10	32	47	30
Groningen	23	8	5	10	32	38	29
Den Haag	23	7	5	11	29	35	26
Willem II	24	7	4	13	26	47	25
NEC	24	5	8	11	25	34	23
De Graafschap	24	4	6	14	25	54	18
RBC	24	5	2	17	24	55	17
Den Bosch	23	2	3	18	12	54	9

LEADING GOALSCORERS
21 Dirk Kuijt (Feyenoord)
14 Jan Vennegoor of Hesselink (PSV)

DUTCH CUP – quarter-finals

Mar 2: Den Haag 0 Ajax 2; Willem II 3 Den Bosch 0.
Mar 3: PSV 6 TOP Oss 1; Feyenoord 4 NAC 0.

ITALY

Saturday, February 12
Inter 2 (Mihajlovic 23, 90)
Roma 0 Att: 61,116

Lazio 2 (Bazzani 45, Liverani 89)
Atalanta 1 (Makinwa 44) Att: 35,798

Sunday, February 13
Bologna 1 (Tare 76)
Palermo 1 (Toni 35) Att: 22,297

Brescia 2 (Zoboli 6, Caracciolo 90)
Cagliari 0 Att: 7,036

Fiorentina 2 (Chiellini 47, Miccoli 81)
Parma 1 (Gilardino 84) Att: 29,490

Juventus 2 (Ibrahimovic 1, Camoranesi 49)
Udinese 1 (Di Michele 90) Att: 20,632

Lecce 3 (Konan 26, Valdes 74, Vucinic 77)
Chievo 0 Att: 11,348

Livorno 1 (C Lucarelli 82)
Sampdoria 0 Att: 15,734

Reggina 0
Milan 1 (Zamboni og 39) Att: 19,944

Siena 2 (Chiesa 47, Chiumiento 83)
Messina 2 (Di Napoli 5, Parisi pen 67) Att: 7,778

Saturday, February 19
Messina 0
Juventus 0 Att: 40,000

Milan 1 (Serginho 90)
Cagliari 0 Att: 59,185

Udinese 1 (Goitom 90)
Inter 1 (Veron 57) Att: 23,714

Sunday, February 20
Atalanta 2 (Marcolini 24, Makinwa 61)
Bologna 0 Att: 10,676

Chievo 0
Lazio 1 (Rocchi 76) Att: 8,082

Palermo 3 (Santana 42, 45, Toni 76)
Lecce 2 (Konan 6, 67) Att: 34,271

Parma 2 (Gilardino pen 22, Morfeo 49)
Brescia 1 (Di Biagio pen 51) Att: 11,736

Roma 3 (Montella 8, Perrotta 70, Totti 86)
Livorno 0 Att: 44,251

Sampdoria 3 (Flachi 8, 45, 70)
Reggina 2 (Colucci 49, Tedesco 88) Att: 23,340

Siena 1 (Flo 6)
Fiorentina 0 Att: 13,166

Saturday, February 26
Brescia 0
Sampdoria 1 (Tonetto 76) Att: 7,276

Fiorentina 2 (Bojinov 22, Ariatti 34)
Udinese 2 (Muntari 41, Di Natale 56) Att: 28,056

Sunday, February 27
Bologna 0
Livorno 0 Att: 15,468

Cagliari 3 (Langella 10, Esposito 43, Abeijon 68)
Atalanta 3 (Sala 17, Makinwa 61, Marcolini pen 90) Att: 12,500

Inter 0
Milan 1 (Kaka 74) Att: 78,347

Juventus 3 (Del Piero 34, pen 62, Emerson 49)
Siena 0 Att: 19,385

Lazio 2 (Oddo pen 19, A Filippini 89)
Parma 0 Att: 33,731

Lecce 1 (Bjelanovic 86)
Messina 0 Att: 12,308

Palermo 2 (Brienza 54, Toni 90)
Roma 0 Att: 33,459

Reggina 1 (Nakamura 40)
Chievo 0 Att: 15,103

Saturday, March 5
Atalanta 1 (Makinwa 73)
Milan 2 (Ambrosini 72, Pirlo 90) Att: 21,095

Roma 1 (Cassano 39)
Juventus 2 (Cannavaro 11, Del Piero pen 44) Att: 69,488

Sunday, March 6
Fiorentina 2 (Pazzini 48, Miccoli pen 69)
Reggina 1 (Colucci 79) Att: 29,755

Inter 2 (Cordoba 26, Adriano pen 89)
Lecce 1 (Pinardi 21) Att: 54,305

Livorno 2 (A Lucarelli 60, Passoni 74)
Palermo 2 (Toni 26, 64) Att: 14,114

Messina 1 (Coppola 44)
Lazio 0 Att: 33,437

Parma 3 (Gilardino 10, Bovo 19, Simplicio 90)
Cagliari 2 (Bonera og 4, Suazo 89) Att: 12,017

Sampdoria 1 (Gasbarroni 82)
Chievo 0 Att: 21,854

Siena 2 (Chiesa 52, Maccarone 89)
Brescia 3 (Di Biagio 40, Caracciolo 45, Mannini 73) Att: 7,038

Udinese 0
Bologna 1 (Tare 4) Att: 13,509

ITALY

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Milan	27	18	6	3	46	17	60
Juventus	27	18	6	3	45	16	60
Sampdoria	27	14	5	8	31	20	47
Inter	27	10	16	1	49	32	46
Palermo	27	11	10	6	30	21	43
Udinese	27	12	6	9	36	27	42
Roma	27	10	8	9	46	40	38
Bologna	27	9	9	9	27	25	36
Lecce	27	9	8	10	46	47	35
Reggina	27	9	8	10	28	31	35
Cagliari	27	9	7	11	38	45	34
Lazio	27	9	6	12	34	37	33
Livorno	27	8	8	11	28	35	32
Messina	27	8	8	11	30	40	32
Fiorentina	27	7	9	11	27	35	30
Parma	27	7	8	12	30	44	29
Chievo	27	7	7	13	21	38	28
Brescia	27	7	5	15	21	34	26
Siena	27	4	13	10	26	41	25
Atalanta	27	3	9	15	23	37	18

LEADING GOALSCORERS
19 Vincenzo Montella (Roma)
15 Adriano (Inter)
14 Alberto Gilardino (Parma)
14 Andrii Shevchenko (Milan)
13 Mauro Esposito (Cagliari)

ITALIAN CUP – qrt-finals, 2nd legs

Feb 16: Inter 3 Atalanta 0 *Inter 4-0 on agg.*

Fiorentina v Roma & Udinese v Milan - Mar 16; Sampdoria v Cagliari - Mar 17

PORTUGAL

Friday, February 11
Belenenses 3 (Lourenco pen 41, Paulo Sergio 80, Rodolfo Lima 86)
Estoril 0

Saturday, February 12
Sporting Braga 0
Benfica 0

Sunday, February 13
Academica 1 (Marcel 76)
Nacional 0

Beira Mar 1 (Beto 52)
Setubal 1 (Meyong pen 19)

Boavista 3 (Diogo Valente 12, 44, Hugo Almeida 62)
Maritimo 2 (Cadu og 68, Alan 75)

Moreirense 1 (Orlando 75)
Gil Vicente 0

Penafiel 3 (Roberto 4, Wesley 12, N'Doye 90)
Uniao Leiria 0

FC Porto 0
Guimaraes 0

Sporting Lisbon 5 (Liedson 11, 42, Sa Pinto pen 36, 43, Hugo Viana 53)
Rio Ave 0

Friday, February 18
Belenenses 0
FC Porto 1 (Costinha 47)

Nacional 1 (Adriano 51)
Sporting Braga 0

Saturday, February 19
Estoril 3 (Buba 38, Vargas 71, 77)
Penafiel 2 (Wesley 10, Roberto 54)

Gil Vicente 0
Academica 1 (Marcel 7)

Maritimo 0
Beira Mar 0

Rio Ave 2 (Evandro 6, 13)
Boavista 2 (Tonito 48, Jose Manuel 85)

Setubal 2 (Jorginho 7, Bruno Moraes 21)
Moreirense 2 (Orlando 17, Sergio Lomba 55)

Uniao Leiria 0
Sporting Lisbon 0

Monday, February 21
Benfica 2 (Geovanni 12, Nuno Assis 43)
Guimaraes 1 (Cesar Peixoto 46)

Friday, February 25
Sporting Braga 2 (Wender 15, Joao Alves 44)
Gil Vicente 1 (Fabio Januario 90)

Saturday, February 26
Boavista 0
Uniao Leiria 0

Penafiel 0
Belenenses 0

Sunday, February 27
Academica 3 (Paulo Adriano 12, Kenedy 49, Dario 83)
Setubal 3 (Meyong 65, Bruno Moraes 78, Igor 89)

Beira Mar 0
Rio Ave 0

Guimaraes 1 (Luis Mario 50)
Nacional 1 (Adriano 65)

Moreirense 1 (Eriverton 6)
Maritimo 0

Monday, February 28
FC Porto 1 (McCarthy 66)
Benfica 1 (Geovanni 76)

Sporting Lisbon 4 (Niculae 8, Rochemback 76, Liedson 85, pen 90)
Estoril 0

Friday, March 4
Gil Vicente 1 (Carlos Carneiro 64)
Guimaraes 3 (Ednilson og 37, Djurdjevic 44, Cleber 86)

Saturday, March 5
Estoril 3 (Dorival 16, Arrieta 82, 86)
Boavista 3 (Hugo Almeida 26, Jose Manuel 85, Helder Rosario 90)

Penafiel 1 (Wesley 1)
FC Porto 2 (Pedro Emanuel 79, McCarthy 90)

Sunday, March 6
Belenenses 1 (Pele 60)
Sporting Lisbon 0

Maritimo 1 (Silas 89)
Academica 1 (Marcel 11)

Nacional 0
Benfica 1 (Nuno Gomes 48)

Rio Ave 1 (Gaucho 35)
Moreirense 0

Uniao Leiria 5 (Joao Paulo 3, Krpan 6, Fabio Felicio 26, 90, Caico 71)
Beira Mar 1 (Beto 35)

Monday, March 7
Setubal 1 (Igor 52)
Sporting Braga 4 (Jaime 6, Joao Tomas 37, Barroso 59, Paulo Sergio 90)

PORTUGAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Benfica	24	13	6	5	37	23	45
FC Porto	24	12	9	3	30	16	45
Sporting Braga	24	12	7	5	35	18	43
Sporting Lisbon	24	12	6	6	50	28	42
Boavista	24	11	8	5	32	30	41
Rio Ave	24	8	12	4	30	29	36
Maritimo	24	8	11	5	26	21	35
Guimaraes	24	9	7	8	25	22	34
Belenenses	24	9	5	10	33	28	32
Setubal	24	8	8	8	34	32	32
Uniao Leiria	24	7	11	6	25	23	32
Nacional	24	9	4	11	29	32	31
Moreirense	24	5	9	10	21	33	24
Penafiel	24	7	3	14	24	41	24
Gil Vicente	24	6	5	13	24	31	23
Estoril	24	6	5	13	29	41	23
Academica	24	5	6	13	20	34	21
Beira Mar	24	4	8	12	23	45	20

LEADING GOALSCORERS
20 Liedson (Sporting Lisbon)
13 Simao Sabrosa (Benfica)
12 Antchouet (Belenenses)
10 Wesley (Penafiel)

PORTUGUESE CUP – quarter-finals

Mar 2: Estrela Amadora 0 Belenenses 0 (aet; Estrela Amadora 8-7 on pens); Maritimo 0 Boavista 2; Setubal 3 Sporting Braga 2.
Mar 3: Benfica 1 Beira Mar 0.

SCOTLAND

Saturday, February 12
Dundee 2 (Lovell 45, 55)
Motherwell 1 (McDonald 40) Att: 5,746

Dunfermline 2 (Mehmet 53, Donnelly 83)
Aberdeen 1 (Diamond 73) Att: 5,579

Hearts 3 (Mikoliunas 15, Fowler og 25, Miller 67)
Kilmarnock 0 Att: 9,220

Livingston 0
Dundee Utd 2 (Crawford 14, Grady 41) Att: 5,158

Rangers 3 (Prso 35, 50, Buffel 61)
Hibernian 0 Att: 50,143

Tuesday, February 15
Motherwell 1 (Craigan 26)
Hibernian 1 (Riordan pen 66) Att: 7,453

Saturday, February 19
Aberdeen 2 (McNaughton 45, Whelan 59)
Livingston 0 Att: 9,214

Dundee Utd 1 (Munro og 30)
Inverness 1 (Wilson 37) Att: 6,110

Hibernian 4 (O'Connor 27, 77, Whittaker 47, Fletcher 76)
Dundee 0 Att: 10,938

Kilmarnock 2 (Naismith 12, Boyd 43)
Dunfermline 1 (Christiansen 20) Att: 4,701

Motherwell 2 (McDonald 23, Fitzpatrick 39)
Hearts 0 Att: 7,390

Sunday, February 20
Celtic 0
Rangers 2 (Vignal 71, Novo 82) Att: 59,041

Saturday, February 26
Rangers 2 (Prso 29, Novo 41)
Kilmarnock 1 (Boyd 76) Att: 48,575

Wednesday, March 2
Celtic 3 (Petrov 49, Balde 60, 87)
Dundee 0 Att: 52,500

Dundee Utd 1 (Scotland 60)
Aberdeen 2 (Diamond 9, Stewart 45) Att: 6,688

Dunfermline 0
Motherwell 0 Att: 3,565

Hearts 1 (Burchill 87)
Rangers 2 (Novo 49, Ricksen pen 90) Att: 13,842

Inverness 3 (Juanjo 39, Brewster 50, Wilson 77)
Hibernian 0 Att: 4,443

Livingston 3 (Horvath 36, McNamee 64, Snodgrass 83)
Kilmarnock 1 (Johnston 13) Att: 2,536

Saturday, March 5
Dundee 0
Livingston 1 (O'Brien 49) Att: 5,830

Dunfermline 1 (Wilson 32)
Hearts 1 (Hartley pen 62) Att: 5,934

Kilmarnock 0
Aberdeen 1 (McNaughton 80) Att: 5,181

Motherwell 2 (Partridge 4, McDonald 47)
Dundee Utd 0 Att: 5,110

Rangers 1 (Ferguson 57)
Inverness 1 (Prunty 90) Att: 49,345

Sunday, March 6
Hibernian 1 (Beuzelin 90)
Celtic 3 (Petrov 5, Hartson 31, Bellamy 69) Att: 15,787

SCOTLAND

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Rangers	29	22	6	1	61	14	72
Celtic	27	22	2	3	59	22	68
Hibernian	28	14	5	9	47	39	47
Aberdeen	28	13	6	9	30	26	45
Hearts	28	11	9	8	32	26	42
Motherwell	28	11	5	12	34	34	38
Kilmarnock	29	10	2	17	35	50	32
Inverness	27	7	9	11	32	37	30
Dunfermline	28	6	8	14	25	40	26
Dundee	28	6	6	16	28	54	24
Dundee Utd	28	4	10	14	29	45	22
Livingston	28	6	4	18	23	48	22

LEADING GOALSCORERS
17 John Hartson (Celtic)
17 Nacho Novo (Rangers)
16 Derek Riordan (Hibernian)
14 Dado Prso (Rangers)

SCOTTISH CUP – 4th rnd (last 16)

Replays
Feb 15: Clyde 2 Ross County 1 (aet).
Feb 16: Kilmarnock 1 Hearts 3.

Quarter-finals

Feb 26: Hibernian 2 St Mirren 0.
Feb 27: Clyde 0 Celtic 5; Dundee Utd 4 Aberdeen 1; Hearts 2 Livingston 1.

SERBIA & MONTENEGRO

Feb 26: Borac 0 Red Star 2; Zeleznik 3 OFK 2; Obilic 1 Vojvodina 0; Smederevo 1 Hajduk B 1; Hajduk K 1 Cukaricki 0; Buducnost P 0 Zemun 1.
Mar 5: Zeta 0 Buducnost P 0.

SERBIA & MONTENEGRO

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Partizan	15	13	2	0	39	8	41
Red Star	16	13	2	1	40	11	41
Zeta	16	11	2	3	30	12	35
OFK	16	8	1	7	24	21	25
Zemun	16	7	4	5	19	19	25
Buducnost P	17	7	3	7	21	21	24
Hajduk K	16	5	6	5	17	18	21
Vojvodina	16	5	4	7	18	20	19
Sutjeska	15	5	4	6	13	21	19
Smederevo	16	4	6	6	10	16	18
Cukaricki	16	4	4	8	15	19	16
Radnicki NB	15	4	4	7	13	20	16
Obilic	16	4	4	8	17	27	16
Borac	16	4	4	8	12	24	16
Zeleznik	16	2	4	10	15	28	10
Hajduk B	16	1	6	9	12	30	9

SPAIN

Saturday, February 12
Valencia 1 (Di Vaio 50)
Deportivo La Coruna 2 (Scaloni 45, Victor 72) Att: 30,000

Zaragoza 1 (Galletti 62)
Barcelona 4 (Toledo og 2, Giuly 30, Eto'o 38, Marquez 70) Att: 34,000

Sunday, February 13
Athletic Bilbao 4 (Urzaiz 32, 35, Gurpegi 47, Yeste 70)
Betis 4 (Ricardo Oliveira 5, 25, 80, Joaquin 12) Att: 25,000

Atletico Madrid 0
Levante 0 Att: 55,000

Espanyol 2 (Soldevilla 89, Tamudo pen 90)
Getafe 0 Att: 19,150

Mallorca 2 (Tuni 52, Luis Garcia 71)
Albacete 1 (Gonzalez 27) Att: 15,000

Numancia 0
Malaga 1 (Juan Rodriguez 44) Att: 8,000

Osasuna 1 (Webo 36)
Real Madrid 2 (Owen 76, Ivan Helguera 79) Att: 16,899

Racing Santander 1 (Anderson Silva 57)
Real Sociedad 3 (Aranburu 8, Nihat 10, 35) Att: 13,414

Sevilla 2 (Julio Baptista 36, pen 81)
Villarreal 1 (Riquelme pen 85) Att: 38,000

Saturday, February 19
Barcelona 2 (Deco 17, 57)
Mallorca 0 Att: 71,038

Real Madrid 0
Athletic Bilbao 2 (Del Horno 57, Iraola 73) Att: 75,000

Real Sociedad 1 (Kovacevic 85)
Sevilla 0 Att: 18,000

Sunday, February 20
Albacete 1 (Gonzalez 37)
Numancia 2 (Merino pen 49, Miguel 85) Att: 12,500

Betis 2 (Marcos Assuncao 38, 57)
Deportivo La Coruna 0 Att: 30,000

Getafe 0
Osasuna 0 Att: 13,000

Levante 0
Zaragoza 0 Att: 18,269

Malaga 3 (Juan Rodriguez 8, Miguel Angel 16, Juanito 53)
Espanyol 2 (Dani 70, Fernando Sanz og 83) Att: 22,000

Racing Santander 1 (Regueiro 52)
Valencia 0 Att: 12,605

Villarreal 3 (Forlan 63, Perea og 82, Sorin 90)
Atletico Madrid 2 (Fernando Torres 26, 38) Att: 20,000

Saturday, February 26
Deportivo La Coruna 2 (Luque 7, Pavon og 13)
Real Madrid 0 Att: 35,000

Espanyol 2 (Maxi Rodriguez 5, Tamudo 23)
Albacete 1 (Pacheco 58) Att: 16,000

Mallorca 1 (Luis Garcia 55)
Levante 2 (Sergio Garcia 64, Jofre 81) Att: 18,000

Numancia 1 (Juanlu 44)
Barcelona 1 (Marquez 46) Att: 10,000

Sunday, February 27
Atletico Madrid 1 (Antonio Lopez 26)
Real Sociedad 0 Att: 45,000

Osasuna 1 (Aloisi 52)
Malaga 6 (Miguel Angel 4, Duda 13, Fernando Baiano 38, 51, Juan Rodriguez 79, Wanchope 81) Att: 13,000

Sevilla 2 (Julio Baptista 14, Dario Silva 78)
Racing Santander 2 (Aganzo 41, Regueiro 84) Att: 25,000

Valencia 2 (Baraja 28, Mista 71)
Betis 1 (Marcos Assuncao 13) Att: 40,000

Zaragoza 1 (Villa 39)
Villarreal 0 Att: 30,000

Tuesday, March 1
Barcelona 0
Espanyol 0 Att: 49,285

Wednesday, March 2
Albacete 1 (Pacheco pen 82)
Osasuna 1 (Morales 68) Att: 8,500

Getafe 1 (Gabi 73)
Deportivo La Coruna 1 (Diego Tristan 41) Att: 9,000

Levante 1 (Ettien 40)
Numancia 1 (Graff 21) Att: 10,282

Malaga 1 (Juan Rodriguez 2)
Athletic Bilbao 0 Att: 23,000

Racing Santander 2 (Regueiro 39, Aganzo 51)
Atletico Madrid 1 (Fernando Torres pen 12) Att: 13,766

Real Madrid 3 (Owen 10, Roberto Carlos 41, Ivan Helguera 62)
Betis 1 (Edu 60) Att: 70,000

Real Sociedad 2 (Karpin pen 45, Barkero 75)
Zaragoza 1 (Zapater 33) Att: 17,838

Sevilla 2 (Jesuli 41, Julio Baptista pen 68)
Valencia 2 (Navarro 47, Aimar 61) Att: 35,000

Villarreal 2 (Figueroa 62, Forlan 77)
Mallorca 1 (Javi Venta og 15) Att: 13,000

Saturday, March 5
Atletico Madrid 3 (Salva 15, Fernando Torres 38, Antonio Lopez 42)
Sevilla 0 Att: 25,000

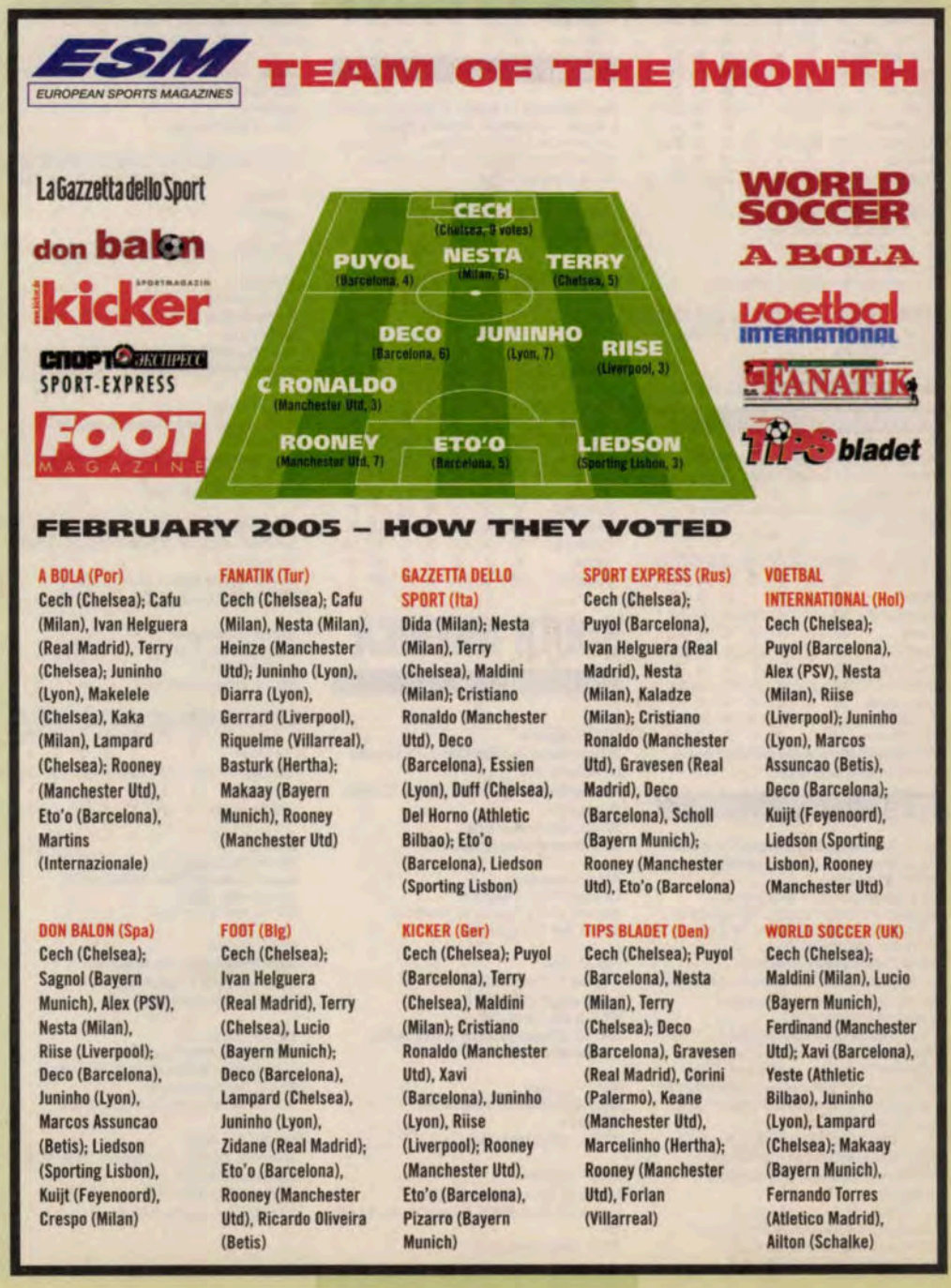
Osasuna 0
Barcelona 1 (Eto'o 40) Att: 17,521

Valencia 1 (Aimar 14)
Real Madrid 1 (Ronaldo 28) Att: 50,000

Sunday, March 6
Athletic Bilbao 3 (Ezquerro 41, Lacruz 71, Guerrero 90)
Albacete 1 (Ruben Castro 13) Att: 28,000

Betis 2 (Rivas 28, Marcos Assuncao 54)
Getafe 2 (Vivar Dorado 15, Pernia 48) Att: 35,000

Deportivo La Coruna 1 (Diego Tristan pen 45)
Malaga 0 Att: 20,000



Espanyol 2 (Amavisca 29, Maxi Rodriguez 65)
Levante 1 (Sergio Garcia 24) Att: 20,000

Mallorca 3 (Romeo 15, 54, Luis Garcia 20)
Real Sociedad 2 (Aranburu 7, Uranga 16) Att: 10,000

Numancia 1 (Merino 59)
Villarreal 1 (Riquelme 28) Att: 7,000

Zaragoza 1 (Capi 59)
Racing Santander 0 Att: 32,000

SPAIN

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Barcelona	27	19	5	3	51	18	62
Real Madrid	27	17	3	7	47	23	54
Espanyol	27	13	6	8	34	29	45
Villarreal	27	12	8	7	44	25	44
Valencia	27	11	10	6	41	28	43
Sevilla	27	12	7	8	32	32	43
Betis	27	11	9	7	43	35	42
Atletico Madrid	27	11	6	10	31	25	39
Dep La Coruna	27	9	12	6	37	35	39
Athletic Bilbao	26	10	8	8	42	34	38
Zaragoza	27	10	5	12	32	40	35
Malaga	27	10	4	13	26	34	34
Real Sociedad	27	9	5	13	34	39	32
Levante	27	8	7	12	29	40	31
Osasuna	27	8	7	12	35	47	31
Getafe	26	7	8	11	25	30	29
R Santander	27	7	7	13	26	40	28
Albacete	27	5	9	13	25	39	24
Mallorca	27	6	6	15	28	45	24
Numancia	27	4	8	15	18	42	20

LEADING GOALSCORERS
18 Samuel Eto'o (Barcelona)
16 Diego Forlan (Villarreal)
15 Ricardo Oliveira (Betis)
14 Fernando Torres (Atletico Madrid)

SPANISH CUP – qrt-finals, 2nd legs

Feb 16: Atletico Madrid 1 Numancia 0 *Atletico Madrid 1-0 on agg.*

Already through: Athletic Bilbao, Betis, Osasuna.

SWITZERLAND

Feb 20: Aarau 1 Neuchatel Xamax 2; Zurich 2 Schaffhausen 0; St Gallen 3 Basle 1; Grasshopper 1 Young Boys 1.
Mar 6: Zurich 0 Neuchatel Xamax 0; Basle 4 Grasshopper 1.

SWITZERLAND

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Basle	20	11	5	4	41	24	38
Neuchatel X	20	9	5	6	28	23	32
Zurich	20	8	5	7	28	25	29
Thun	18	8	4	6	26	18	28
Young Boys	19	6	7	6	32	30	25
Aarau	19	6	5	8	27	28	23
Grasshopper	20	5	8	7	18	31	23
St Gallen	19	5	7	7	26	30	22
Schaffhausen	19	3	7	9	21	34	16

**Servette will take no further part in the season because of financial problems*

TURKEY

Feb 12: Ankaragucu 2 Kayserispor 2; Konyaspor 3 Samsunspor 0; Rizespor 0 Galatasaray 3; Besiktas 2 Denizlispor 0.
Feb 13: Diyarbakirspor 1 Sebatspor 0; Sakaryaspor 2 Gaziantepspor 2; Trabzonspor 3 Malatyaspor 0; Ankaraspor 2 Genclerbirligi 1; Fenerbahce 4 Istanbulspor 0.
Feb 18: Gaziantepspor 0 Besiktas 1.
Feb 19: Istanbulspor 2 Konyaspor 2; Sebatspor 0 Ankaragucu 0; Denizlispor 1 Ankaraspor 1; Galatasaray 1 Sakaryaspor 0.
Feb 20: Malatyaspor 2 Diyarbakirspor 1; Samsunspor 0 Rizespor 1; Genclerbirligi 0 Trabzonspor 1; Fenerbahce 7 Kayserispor 0.
Feb 26: Rizespor 1 Istanbulspor 1; Diyarbakirspor 1 Genclerbirligi 3; Ankaragucu 3 Malatyaspor 0; Samsunspor 2 Galatasaray 1.
Feb 27: Fenerbahce 2 Sebatspor 0; Besiktas 2 Sakaryaspor 1; Trabzonspor 3 Denizlispor 0; Ankaraspor 1 Gaziantepspor 0; Konyaspor 3 Kayserispor 1.
Mar 5: Istanbulspor 1 Samsunspor 1; Genclerbirligi 4 Ankaragucu 0; Sakaryaspor 1 Ankaraspor 1; Galatasaray 1 Besiktas 0.
Mar 6: Denizlispor 0 Diyarbakirspor 0; Kayserispor 2 Rizespor 1; Sebatspor 3 Konyaspor 5; Gaziantepspor 3 Trabzonspor 2; Malatyaspor 0 Fenerbahce 2.
Mar 9: Besiktas 0 Genclerbirligi 0 (restaging of match played on Feb 6); Istanbulspor 1 Ankaragucu 2.

TURKEY

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Fenerbahce	23	19	2	2	60	10	59
Galatasaray	23	17	3	3	43	14	54
Trabzonspor	23	16	4	3	46	17	52
Besiktas	23	12	6	5	46	27	42
Denizlispor	23	10	5	8	31	28	35
Rizespor	23	9	7	7	27	21	34
Konyaspor	23	7	10	6	45	45	31
Gaziantepspor	23	9	4	10	34	36	31
Malatyaspor	23	9	4	10	29	33	31
Ankaraspor	23	8	6	9	31	31	30
Genclerbirligi	23	8	5	10	29	29	29
Samsunspor	23	8	4	11	29	40	28
Ankaragucu	23	7	6	10	21	34	27
Diyarbakirspor	23	7	5	11	22	36	26
Sakaryaspor	23	5	4	14	27	49	19
Istanbulspor	23	3	9	11	21	36	18
Kayserispor	23	5	3	15	30	55	18
Sebatspor	23	1	7	15	25	55	10

UKRAINE

Mar 1: Metalurh D 1 Arsenal 0; Tavriya 2 Borysfen 1; Vorskla 1 Metalurh Z 0; Dnipro 3 Obolon 0; Chornomorets 2 Metalist 1; Dynamo 2 Kryvbas 0; Illichivets 0 Shakhtar 1; Volyn 3 Zakarpattya 0.
Mar 5: Shakhtar 3 Volyn 1.
Mar 6: Metalurh Z 2 Metalurh D 0; Zakarpattya 0 Tavriya 0; Kryvbas 0 Illichivets 0; Metalist 0 Dynamo 2; Arsenal 1 Dnipro 2.
Mar 7: Obolon 1 Chornomorets 1.

UKRAINE

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Shakhtar	17	15	0	2	35	9	45
Dynamo	17	14	2	1	37	7	44
Metalurh D	17	11	2	4	25	17	35
Dnipro	17	8	5	4	23	19	29
Volyn	17	8	4	5	23	20	28
Chornomorets	17	8	3	6	18	14	27
Illichivets	17	5	6	6	24	23	21
Metalist	17	6	2	9	18	25	20
Arsenal	17	5	5	7	18	23	20
Tavriya	17	5	4	8	13	18	19
Kryvbas	17	4	7	6	12	17	19
Metalurh Z	17	3	8	6	12	18	17
Vorskla	16	4	3	9	8	17	15
Zakarpattya	17	2	6	9	11	21	12
Obolon	17	2	6	9	9	25	12
Borysfen	16	0	7	9	7	20	7

SOUTH AMERICA

LIBERTADORES CUP

Group 1

Feb 15 - Medellin
Independiente Medellin (Col) 2 (J D Gonzalez 83, Morantes 90)
Atletico Paranaense (Bra) 2 (Marcao 12, Denis Marques 50)
HT: 0-1. **Ref:** Reinoso (Ecu)
Sent off: Marin (Atletico) 84min

Feb 17 - Asuncion
Libertad (Par) 1 (Devaca 48)
America (Col) 2 (Salazar 36, Chara 57)
HT: 0-1. **Ref:** Vazquez (Uru)

Feb 22 - Cali
America 1 (Londono 87)
Independiente Medellin 0
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Hoyos (Col)
Sent off: Arrechea (America) 89min; Benitez (Independiente) 89min

Mar 1 - Curitiba
Atletico Paranaense 1 (Maciel 58)
Libertad 0
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Elizondo (Arg)

Mar 8 - Asuncion
Libertad 3 (Samudio 39, pen 42, 45)
Independiente Medellin 2 (Castrillon 20, Valoyes 56)
HT: 3-1. **Ref:** Chandia (Chl)

Mar 10 - Cali
America 3 (Mina 36, Diaz 45, Ferreira 65)
Atletico Paranaense 1 (Marin 51)
HT: 2-0. **Ref:** Baldassi (Arg)

GROUP 1

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
America	3	3	0	0	6	2	9
At Paranaense	3	1	1	1	4	5	4
Libertad	3	1	0	2	4	5	3
Indep Medellin	3	0	1	2	4	6	1

Group 2

Feb 16 - La Paz
Bolivar (Bol) 4 (Zermatten 1, 53, 86, Cabrera 87)
Santos (Bra) 3 (Deivid 25, 56, Robinho 90)
HT: 1-1. **Ref:** Torres (Par)

Feb 24 - Montevideo
Danubio (Uru) 3 (Risso 2, Gonzalez 8, Pouso 80)
LDU Quito (Ecu) 0
HT: 2-0. **Ref:** Grance (Par)

Mar 3 - Santos
Santos 3 (Leo 39, Robinho 71, Ricardinho pen 89)
Danubio 2 (Gonzalez 1, Viera 87)
HT: 1-1. **Ref:** Brazenas (Arg)

Mar 8 - Quito
LDU Quito 1 (Mendez 26)
Bolivar 0
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Ruiz (Col)

GROUP 2

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Danubio	2	1	0	1	5	3	3
Santos	2	1	0	1	6	6	3
Bolivar	2	1	0	1	4	4	3
LDU Quito	2	1	0	1	1	3	3

Group 3

Feb 22 - Santiago
Universidad de Chile (Chl) 3 (Olea 36, Ponce 45, Martinez 90)
Quilmes (Arg) 2 (Vivas 35, Torres 59)
HT: 2-1. **Ref:** Mendez (Uru)

Mar 3 - La Paz
The Strongest (Bol) 3 (Cuba 29, Sosa 39, Escobar 55)
Sao Paulo (Bra) 3 (Danilo 22, Luizao 58, Grafite 88)
HT: 2-1. **Ref:** Mendez (Uru)

Mar 9 - Sao Paulo
Sao Paulo 4 (Lugano 3, Rogerio Ceni 21, Cicinho 45, Grafite 65)
Universidad de Chile 2 (Gioino 7, 39)
HT: 3-2. **Ref:** Larrionda (Uru)

Mar 10 - Buenos Aires
Quilmes 1 (Osorio 42)
The Strongest 0
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Grance (Par)

GROUP 3

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Sao Paulo	2	1	1	0	7	5	4
Quilmes	2	1	0	1	3	3	3
U de Chile	2	1	0	1	5	6	3
The Strongest	2	0	1	1	3	4	1

Group 4

Mar 2 - San Cristobal
Deportivo Tachira (Ven) 1 (Alvarado 15)
Santo Andre (Bra) 0
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Ortube (Bol)

Mar 2 - Asuncion
Cerro Porteno (Par) 1 (Salcedo 44)
Palmeiras (Bra) 1 (Osmar 73)
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Baldassi (Arg)

Mar 10 - Santo Andre
Santo Andre 2 (Rodrigao 40, 54)
Cerro Porteno 2 (Salcedo 18, Ramirez 45)
HT: 1-2. **Ref:** Selman (Chl)
Sent off: Richarlyson (Santo Andre) 67min

Mar 10 - Sao Paulo
Palmeiras 3 (Kloker og 9, Osmar 11, Warley 84)
Deportivo Tachira 0
HT: 2-0. **Ref:** Vazquez (Uru)
Sent off: Cuevas (Tachira) 62min

GROUP 4

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Palmeiras	2	1	1	0	4	1	4
Dep Tachira	2	1	0	1	1	3	3
Cerro Porteno	2	0	2	0	3	3	2
Santo Andre	2	0	1	1	2	3	1

Group 5

Feb 15 - Montevideo
Nacional (Uru) 0
Atletico Junior (Col) 1 (Arzuaga 84)
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Pozo (Chl)

Feb 23 - Riobamba
Olmedo (Ecu) 2 (Rodriguez 80, 90)
River Plate (Arg) 3 (Patino 7, Mascherano 17, Farias pen 67)
HT: 0-2. **Ref:** Simon (Bra)

Mar 1 - Barranquilla
Atletico Junior 2 (Arzuaga 32, O Perez 53)
Olmedo 0
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Garay (Per)

Mar 3 - Buenos Aires
River Plate 1 (Gallardo 6)
Nacional 0
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Amarilla (Par)

GROUP 5

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
At Junior	2	2	0	0	3	0	6
River Plate	2	2	0	0	4	2	6
Nacional	2	0	0	2	0	2	0
Olmedo	2	0	0	2	2	5	0

Group 6

Feb 15 - Lima
Alianza Lima (Per) 0
Tigres (Mex) 0
Ref: Rezende (Bra)

Feb 17 - Caracas
Caracas (Ven) 1 (Noriega 17)
Banfield (Arg) 1 (Piriz Alvez 49)
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Lopez (Col)

Feb 23 - Buenos Aires
Banfield 3 (Cervera 32, Andrizzi 63, Ceballos 88)
Alianza Lima 2 (Olcese 64, 81)
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Carvalho (Bra)

Feb 23 - Monterrey
Tigres 3 (Sanchez 39, Silvera 51, Nunez pen 57)
Caracas 1 (Castellin 60)
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Chandia (Chl)

Mar 1 - Lima
Alianza Lima 2 (Astudillo 45, Soto pen 62)
Caracas 1 (Garcia 32)
HT: 1-1. **Ref:** Duque (Col)
Sent off: Vizcarrondo (Caracas) 45min; Fano (Alianza) 48min

GROUP 6

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Tigres	2	1	1	0	3	1	4
Banfield	2	1	1	0	4	3	4
Alianza Lima	3	1	1	1	4	4	4
Caracas	3	0	1	2	3	6	1

Group 7

Feb 16 - Calama
Cobreloa (Chl) 1 (J L Gonzalez 90)
Guadalajara (Mex) 3 (Garcia 11, Palencia 49, Bravo 60)
HT: 0-1. **Ref:** Rivera (Per)

Feb 24 - Manizales
Once Caldas (Col) 0
San Lorenzo (Arg) 0
Ref: Larrionda (Uru)

Mar 2 - Guadalajara
Guadalajara 0
Once Caldas 0
Ref: Souza (Bra)
Sent off: Rodriguez (Guadalajara) 85min

Mar 9 - Buenos Aires
San Lorenzo 0
Cobreloa 0
Ref: Torres (Par)
Sent off: Paredes (San Lorenzo) 90min

GROUP 7	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Guadalajara	2	1	1	0	3	1	4
Once Caldas	2	0	2	0	0	0	2
San Lorenzo	2	0	2	0	0	0	2
Cobreloa	2	0	1	1	1	3	1

Group 8

Feb 16 - Lima
Sporting Cristal (Per) 2 (Zegarra 57, Bonnet pen 84)
Pachuca (Mex) 0
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Lopes (Bra)

Feb 17 - Cuenca
Deportivo Cuenca (Ecu) 0
Boca Juniors (Arg) 0
Ref: Selman (Chl)

Feb 24 - Pachuca
Pachuca 2 (Chitiva 22, Vidrio 45)
Deportivo Cuenca 1 (Quinonez 39)
HT: 2-1. **Ref:** Brand (Ven)

Mar 2 - Buenos Aires
Boca Juniors 3 (Palermo 16, 65, Baiano 29)
Sporting Cristal 0
HT: 2-0. **Ref:** Chandia (Chl)

Mar 8 - Lima
Sporting Cristal 1 (Bonnet 66)
Deportivo Cuenca 0
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Lopez (Col)
Sent off: Noriega (Cuenca) 39min

GROUP 8	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Sporting Cristal	3	2	0	1	3	3	6
Boca Juniors	2	1	1	0	3	0	4
Pachuca	2	1	0	1	2	3	3
Dep Cuenca	3	0	1	2	1	3	1

Top two from each group qualify for knockout stages

ARGENTINA

CLOSING CHAMPIONSHIP

Friday, February 11
Argentinos Juniors 1 (Morinigo 76)
Racing Club 0

Banfield 0
Instituto 0

Olimpo 3 (Galvan 32, 64, Delorte 50)
San Lorenzo 0

Saturday, February 12
Gimnasia LP 2 (Enria 6, Vargas 65)
Almagro 1 (Miranda 44)

Velez Sarsfield 0
Newell's Old Boys 0

Sunday, February 13
Boca Juniors 2 (Cagna 38, Barros Schelotto pen 43)
Lanus 2 (Graf 74, Fabbiani 83)

Colon Santa Fe 2 (Diaz 45, Cominges 48)
River Plate 3 (Farias 17, Gonzalez 44, Dominguez 59)

Huracan 0
Estudiantes 1 (Ortiz 24)

Independiente 0
Quilmes 0

Rosario Central 2 (Rivarola 45, Diaz 81)
Arsenal 1 (Casteglione 88)

Friday, February 18
Quilmes 2 (Benitez 5, Velazquez pen 64)
Velez Sarsfield 0

Racing Club 2 (Cardetti 26, Romero 33)
Olimpo 0

Saturday, February 19
Almagro 2 (Rios 46, Gonzalez 74)
Independiente 2 (Flores 17, Duarte og 68)

Lanus 3 (Fabbiani 54, Diaz 56, Biglieri 65)
Gimnasia LP 0

Sunday, February 20
Arsenal 1 (Morales 8)
Huracan 1 (Gancedo 3)

Estudiantes 3 (Pavone 53, 77, Aquino 61)
Colon Santa Fe 1 (Caceres og 80)

Instituto 3 (Jimenez 11, 15, 67)
Argentinos Juniors 2 (Morinigo 32, Galvan pen 76)

Newell's Old Boys 0
Rosario Central 0

River Plate 1 (Gonzalez 84)
Banfield 0

San Lorenzo 3 (Peirone 37, 65, 77)
Boca Juniors 0

Friday, February 25
Independiente 0
Lanus 1 (Diaz 25)

Velez Sarsfield 0
Almagro 0

Saturday, February 26
Colon Santa Fe 0
Arsenal 2 (Gonzalez 33, Casteglione 80)

Instituto 0
Racing Club 1 (Lopez 74)

Sunday, February 27
Argentinos Juniors 3 (Fleitas 8, Morinigo 40, Gandolfi og 64)
River Plate 3 (Salas 17, 29, Farias 57)

Banfield 0
Estudiantes 0

Boca Juniors 3 (Palermo 36, 52, Cardozo 80)
Olimpo 1 (Galvan 38)

Gimnasia LP 3 (Vargas 33, Enria pen 56, 67)
San Lorenzo 1 (Pereyra 43)

Huracan 0
Newell's Old Boys 2 (Zapata 5, Esnaider 78)

Rosario Central 1 (Encina 34)
Quilmes 0

Friday, March 4
Lanus 1 (Diaz 48)
Velez Sarsfield 2 (Zarate 60, Martinez 63)

Newell's Old Boys 1 (Belluschi 16)
Colon Santa Fe 1 (Esnaider og 76)

Saturday, March 5
Arsenal 2 (Calderon 46, Mannara 71)
Banfield 1 (Sanguinetti 67)

San Lorenzo 2 (Bottinelli 20, Montillo 80)
Independiente 4 (Frutos 10, 36, Carrizo 34, Flores 58)

Sunday, March 6
Almagro 1 (Gallardo 62)
Rosario Central 4 (Vitti 22, 25, 59, Villa 37)

Estudiantes 1 (Pavone 25)
Argentinos Juniors 3 (Carrario 1, 46, Oberman 52)

Olimpo 1 (Delorte 55)
Gimnasia LP 0

Quilmes 3 (Saavedra 12, Velazquez 40, 62)
Huracan 0

Racing Club 1 (Guerrero 28)
Boca Juniors 0

River Plate 3 (Farias 20, 31, Fernandez 82)
Instituto 1 (Jimenez 9)

ARGENTINA – CLOSING	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Rosario Central	4	3	1	0	7	2	10
River Plate	4	3	1	0	10	6	10
Racing Club	4	3	0	1	4	1	9
Quilmes	4	2	1	1	5	1	7
Lanus	4	2	1	1	7	4	7
Argentinos Jnrs	4	2	1	1	9	7	7
Arsenal	4	2	1	1	6	4	7
Estudiantes	4	2	1	1	5	4	7
Newell's OB	4	1	3	0	3	1	6
Olimpo	4	2	0	2	5	5	6
Gimnasia LP	4	2	0	2	5	6	6
Independiente	4	1	2	1	6	5	5
Velez Sarsfield	4	1	2	1	2	3	5
Boca Juniors	4	1	1	2	5	7	4
Instituto	4	1	1	2	4	6	4
San Lorenzo	4	1	0	3	6	10	3
Banfield	4	0	2	2	1	3	2
Almagro	4	0	2	2	4	8	2
Colon Santa Fe	4	0	1	3	4	9	1
Huracan	4	0	1	3	1	7	1

LEADING GOALSCORER
4 Ernesto Farias (River Plate)

CHILE

OPENING CHAMPIONSHIP

Feb 11: Union Espanola 2 Everton 2; Rangers 1 Dep Melipilla 1.
Feb 12: Puerto Montt 0 U de Chile 1; Colo Colo 0 U de Concepcion 1; Cobreloa 5 Dep Temuco 4; Coquimbo Unido 1 Audax Italiano 0; Santiago Wanderers 1 Cobresal 3; San Felipe 0 Dep La Serena 0.
Feb 13: Dep Concepcion 1 U Catolica 0; Palestino 2 Huachipato 3.
Feb 19: Dep La Serena 3 Colo Colo 7; U de Concepcion 2 San Felipe 0; Audax Italiano 0 Palestino 2; Everton 3 Puerto Montt 2; Huachipato 0 Rangers 1.
Feb 20: Dep Melipilla 0 Cobreloa 1; U Catolica 3 Santiago Wanderers 0; Cobresal 4 Union Espanola 3; Dep Temuco 2 Coquimbo Unido 1.
Feb 26: Colo Colo 2 Everton 1; Coquimbo Unido 3 U de Concepcion 1; San Felipe 0 U Catolica 2; Santiago Wanderers 0 Dep Temuco 1; Union Espanola 1 Dep La Serena 2; Rangers 2 Audax Italiano 0.
Feb 27: Cobreloa 1 U de Chile 1; Dep Concepcion 0 Dep Melipilla 0; Huachipato 0 Cobresal 2; Palestino 0 Puerto Montt 3.
Mar 2: Colo Colo 2 Cobresal 2; U de Concepcion 3 Audax Italiano 0.
Mar 5: U de Chile 3 Santiago Wanderers 0; Dep Temuco 1 Colo Colo 2; Cobreloa 1 Rangers 1; Everton 0 Coquimbo Unido 1; Dep La Serena 4 Palestino 0.
Mar 6: U de Concepcion 2 Huachipato 0; U Catolica 2 Audax Italiano 1; Dep Melipilla 1 Union Espanola 2; Puerto Montt 1 San Felipe 0; Cobresal 0 Dep Concepcion 1.

CHILE – OPENING – GROUP A	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Colo Colo	8	4	3	1	17	10	15
Huachipato	8	4	1	3	15	14	13
San Felipe	8	2	1	5	5	11	7
Dep Melipilla	8	1	3	4	3	10	6
Audax Italiano	8	0	3	5	6	15	3

GROUP B	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Coq'bo Unido	8	5	0	3	11	8	15
Cobreloa	7	4	2	1	14	11	14
Dep La Serena	8	4	2	2	16	15	14
Puerto Montt	8	2	0	6	7	12	6
S Wanderers	8	1	1	6	9	17	4

GROUP C	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
U Concepcion	8	4	1	3	10	7	13
Dep Concepcion	7	3	3	1	7	6	12
Dep Temuco	8	2	2	4	11	13	8
Union Espanola	7	1	4	2	12	13	7
Palestino	8	2	0	6	8	16	6

GROUP D	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
U Catolica	8	6	1	1	17	5	19
Cobresal	8	5	2	1	17	9	17
U de Chile	7	5	1	1	14	5	16
Rangers	8	3	3	2	8	7	12
Everton	8	2	3	3	12	15	9

COLOMBIA

OPENING CHAMPIONSHIP

Feb 12: Envigado 4 Millonarios 1; Dep Cali 0 Indep Medellin 1.
Feb 13: At Nacional 2 America 1; Tolima 1 Dep Pasto 1; Indep Santa Fe 3 Quindio 1; Once Caldas 1 Real Cartagena 0; Chico 1 At Huila 0.
Feb 16: At Huila 0 Tolima 0; Millonarios 2 Chico 2; Pereira 1 Envigado 1; Indep Medellin 0 Bucaramanga 1; Real Cartagena 1 At Nacional 3; Quindio 0 Once Caldas 1; Dep Pasto 1 Indep Santa Fe 1.
Feb 19: At Nacional 3 Quindio 0.
Feb 20: Indep Santa Fe 0 Tolima 2; Magdalena 0 Real Cartagena 1; Bucaramanga 0 At Junior 2; Envigado 3 Indep Medellin 3; Chico 2 Pereira 1; At Huila 1 Millonarios 1.
Feb 23: Bucaramanga 0 Pereira 1; At Junior 3 Dep Cali 3.
Feb 26: Indep Santa Fe 1 Once Caldas 0.
Feb 27: Tolima 3 Millonarios 3; Pereira 0 At Huila 0; At Junior 3 Envigado 2; America 1 Bucaramanga 2; Real Cartagena 0 Dep Cali 1; Quindio 2 Magdalena 0; Dep Pasto 1 At Nacional 1.
Mar 2: At Nacional 1 Indep Santa Fe 1; Magdalena 2 Dep Pasto 0; Dep Cali 3 Quindio 0; Bucaramanga 0 Real Cartagena 1; Envigado 1 America 1; At Huila 1 Indep Medellin 0; Millonarios 3 Pereira 2.
Mar 5: Indep Medellin 2 Millonarios 1.
Mar 6: Tolima 2 Pereira 0; At Junior 1 At Huila 0; America 1 Chico 1; Real Cartagena 0 Envigado 1; Quindio 2 Bucaramanga 1; Dep Pasto 1 Dep Cali 0; Indep Santa Fe 0 Magdalena 0; Once Caldas 1 At Nacional 2.
Mar 9: Once Caldas 1 Tolima 2; Magdalena 1 At Junior 0.

COLOMBIA – OPENING	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
At Nacional	6	4	2	0	12	5	14
Tolima	6	3	3	0	10	5	12
At Junior	5	3	1	1	9	6	10
Envigado	6	2	3	1	12	9	9
Indep Santa Fe	6	2	3	1	6	5	9
Chico	4	2	2	0	6	4	8
Dep Cali	5	2	1	2	7	5	7
Indep Medellin	5	2	1	2	6	6	7
Magdalena	5	2	1	2	3	3	7
Once Caldas	5	2	0	3	4	5	6
Bucaramanga	6	2	0	4	4	7	6
Real Cartagena	6	2	0	4	3	6	6
Quindio	6	2	0	4	5	11	6
Dep Pasto	5	1	3	1	4	5	6
At Huila	6	1	3	2	2	3	6
Millonarios	6	1	3	2	11	14	6
Pereira	6	1	2	3	5	8	5
America	4	0	2	2	4	6	2

ECUADOR

OPENING CHAMPIONSHIP
League stage

Feb 12: Dep Quevedo 3 Barcelona 3.
Feb 13: El Nacional 1 Dep Cuenca 1; Aucas 2 Olmedo 2; Dep Quito 5 LDU Loja 0; Emelec 0 LDU Quito 2.
Feb 19: LDU Loja 3 Emelec 1.
Feb 20: El Nacional 1 Dep Quevedo 1; LDU Quito 4 Dep Cuenca 1; Olmedo 0 Dep Quito 1; Barcelona 2 Aucas 0.
Feb 26: Dep Quevedo 2 LDU Loja 2; Emelec 0 Olmedo 0.
Feb 27: Dep Quito 0 Aucas 2; Dep Cuenca 0 Barcelona 0.
Feb 28: El Nacional 4 LDU Quito 1.
Mar 4: LDU Quito 2 Dep Quito 1.
Mar 5: LDU Loja 5 Dep Cuenca 2.
Mar 6: Aucas 1 Emelec 0; Olmedo 1 Dep Quevedo 0; Barcelona 1 El Nacional 1.

ECUADOR – OPENING	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
LDU Quito	4	2	1	1	9	8	7
Aucas	4	2	1	1	5	4	7
LDU Loja	4	2	1	1	10	10	7
Dep Quito	4	2	0	2	7	4	6
El Nacional	4	1	3	0	7	4	6
Barcelona	4	1	3	0	6	4	6
Olmedo	4	1	2	1	3	3	5
Dep Quevedo	4	0	3	1	6	7	3
Emelec	4	0	2	2	3	6	2
Dep Cuenca	4	0	2	2	4	10	2

PARAGUAY

OPENING CHAMPIONSHIP

Feb 11: Sportivo Luqueno 1 12 de Octubre 1.
Feb 12: Nacional 1 Guarani 0.
Feb 13: General Caballero 0 3 de Febrero 0; Libertad 0 Tacuary 4; Olimpia 1 Cerro Porteno 1.
Feb 18: Tacuary 2 General Caballero 2; 12 de Octubre 2 Guarani 1.
Feb 19: 3 de Febrero 0 Olimpia 0.
Feb 20: Cerro Porteno 2 Sportivo Luqueno 1.
Feb 21: Libertad 0 Nacional 2.
Feb 25: General Caballero 0 Libertad 1.
Feb 26: Guarani 1 Cerro Porteno 3.
Feb 27: Sportivo Luqueno 2 3 de Febrero 1; Nacional 2 12 de Octubre 1.
Mar 5: Libertad 3 Olimpia 0.
Mar 6: General Caballero 1 Nacional 0; 3 de Febrero 3 Guarani 1; Cerro Porteno 3 12 de Octubre 0.
Mar 7: Tacuary 1 Sportivo Luqueno 1.

PARAGUAY – OPENING

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Cerro Porteno	4	3	1	0	9	3	10
Nacional	4	3	0	1	5	2	9
Libertad	4	2	0	2	4	6	6
Tacuary	3	1	2	0	7	3	5
3 de Febrero	4	1	2	1	4	3	5
Sp Luqueno	4	1	2	1	5	5	5
Gen Caballero	4	1	2	1	3	3	5
12 de Octubre	4	1	1	2	4	7	4
Olimpia	3	0	2	1	1	4	2
Guarani	4	0	0	4	3	9	0

PERU

OPENING CHAMPIONSHIP

Mar 5: At Universidad 1 Cienciano 1; Coronel Bolognesi 0 Universitario 0; Universidad SMP 1 Sporting Cristal 2; Alianza Lima 0 Melgar 1.
Mar 6: Sport Ancash 1 Sport Boys 0; Universidad CV 3 Alianza Atletico 3.

PERU – OPENING

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Sporting Cristal	1	1	0	0	2	1	3
Melgar	1	1	0	0	1	0	3
Sport Ancash	1	1	0	0	1	0	3
Alianza Atletico	1	0	1	0	3	3	1
Univ CV	1	0	1	0	3	3	1
At Universidad	1	0	1	0	1	1	1
Cienciano	1	0	1	0	1	1	1
C Bolognesi	1	0	1	0	0	0	1
Universitario	1	0	1	0	0	0	1
Union Huaral	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Univ SMP	1	0	0	1	1	2	0
Alianza Lima	1	0	0	1	0	1	0
Sport Boys	1	0	0	1	0	1	0

URUGUAY

TRANSITIONAL TOURNAMENT*

Mar 5: Penarol 2 Tacuarembo 2; Paysandu 3 Rocha 3; Cerrito 2 Cerro 2.
Mar 6: Nacional 3 Rampla Juniors 1; Rentistas 1 Danubio 2; Liverpool 3 Plaza 0; Defensor 4 River Plate 2; Dep Colonia 2 Wanderers 0; Fenix 2 Miramar Misiones 0.

URUGUAY – TRANSITIONAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Liverpool	1	1	0	0	3	0	3
Defensor	1	1	0	0	4	2	3
Nacional	1	1	0	0	3	1	3
Dep Colonia	1	1	0	0	2	0	3
Fenix	1	1	0	0	2	0	3
Danubio	1	1	0	0	2	1	3
Paysandu	1	0	1	0	3	3	1
Rocha	1	0	1	0	3	3	1
Cerrito	1	0	1	0	2	2	1
Cerro	1	0	1	0	2	2	1
Penarol	1	0	1	0	2	2	1
Tacuarembo	1	0	1	0	2	2	1
Rentistas	1	0	0	1	1	2	0
River Plate	1	0	0	1	2	4	0
Rampla Jnrs	1	0	0	1	1	3	0
M Misiones	1	0	0	1	0	2	0
Wanderers	1	0	0	1	0	2	0
Plaza	1	0	0	1	0	3	0

**From now on, the Uruguayan opening and closing championships will be played either side of New Year rather than in the same calendar year. The next opening campaign kicks off in August*

VENEZUELA

CLOSING CHAMPIONSHIP

Feb 12: Caracas 4 Monagas 0.
Feb 13: UA Maracaibo 2 Ital-Chacao 1; Carabobo 2 Trujillanos 0; Dep Tachira 4 ItalMaracaibo 0; Mineros Guayana 3 Estudiantes 2.
Feb 17: Dep Tachira 3 Carabobo 2.
Feb 19: Trujillanos 0 UA Maracaibo 1.
Feb 20: Ital-Chacao 2 Mineros Guayana 2; ItalMaracaibo 3 Carabobo 0; Monagas 0 Dep Tachira 2.
Feb 26: UA Maracaibo 2 ItalMaracaibo 1.
Feb 27: Carabobo 2 Monagas 2; Mineros Guayana 3 Trujillanos 2; Estudiantes 0 Ital-Chacao 0.
Mar 5: Ital-Chacao 0 Caracas 1; ItalMaracaibo 1 Mineros Guayana 1.
Mar 6: Trujillanos 2 Estudiantes 2.
Mar 9: Estudiantes 0 Caracas 0; UA Maracaibo 1 Mineros Guayana 0.

VENEZUELA – CLOSING

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
UA Maracaibo	8	6	2	0	13	4	20
Caracas	9	5	4	0	15	3	19
Dep Tachira	9	6	1	2	16	9	19
Mineros G'ana	9	3	4	2	14	14	13
Carabobo	9	2	5	2	10	10	11
ItalMaracaibo	9	3	2	4	13	16	11
Ital-Chacao	9	2	3	4	12	12	9
Estudiantes	9	1	5	3	9	13	8
Monagas	8	1	2	5	11	20	5
Trujillanos	9	0	2	7	8	20	2

CENTRAL & NORTH AMERICA

CONCACAF CHAMPIONS CUP

Quarter-finals, 1st legs

Mar 9: DC United (USA) 2 Harbour View (Jam) 1; Kansas City Wizards (USA) 0 Saprissa (CR) 0; Monterrey (Mex) 2 Municipal (Gtm) 1; Olimpia (Hnd) 1 Pumas UNAM (Mex) 1.

MEXICO

CLOSING CHAMPIONSHIP

Feb 11: Tecos UAG 1 Pachuca 0.
Feb 12: Toluca 1 Atlante 0; Cruz Azul 1 Morelia 0; Dorados 1 Monterrey 0; Tigres 2 Guadalajara 2; Veracruz 1 Pumas UNAM 0; Atlas 2 Necaxa 0.
Feb 13: America 4 Jaguares 1; Santos 2 Puebla 0.
Feb 19: Jaguares 2 Santos 0; Monterrey 4 America 2; Pachuca 1 Toluca 1; Guadalajara 1 Cruz Azul 1; Necaxa 4 Dorados 3.
Feb 20: Pumas UNAM 2 Tigres 1; Atlante 5 Veracruz 1; Puebla 0 Tecos UAG 3; Morelia 4 Atlas 1.
Feb 26: Cruz Azul 2 Pumas UNAM 2; Dorados 0 Morelia 1; Tigres 2 Atlante 1; Atlas 2 Guadalajara 3.
Feb 27: America 2 Necaxa 0; Puebla 1 Jaguares 0; Tecos UAG 4 Toluca 2; Santos 3 Monterrey 1; Veracruz 1 Pachuca 2.
Mar 5: Toluca 1 Veracruz 1; Monterrey 4 Puebla 1; Jaguares 1 Tecos UAG 1; Morelia 1 America 1; Guadalajara 1 Dorados 1; Necaxa 4 Santos 2.
Mar 6: Pumas UNAM 3 Atlas 2; Atlante 2 Cruz Azul 0; Pachuca 1 Tigres 1.

MEXICO – CLOSING – GROUP 1

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Tecos UAG	8	5	2	1	18	10	17
Morelia	8	5	2	1	11	5	17
America	8	4	3	1	19	13	15
Atlante	8	3	2	3	11	9	11
Pumas UNAM	8	3	1	4	11	11	10
Dorados	8	1	3	4	8	11	6

GROUP 2

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Cruz Azul	8	5	2	1	17	8	17
Toluca	8	4	2	2	10	9	14
Tigres	8	2	4	2	10	9	10
Guadalajara	8	2	4	2	11	13	10
Puebla	8	2	2	4	10	16	8
Atlas	8	1	0	7	10	19	3

GROUP 3

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Santos	8	5	0	3	17	15	15
Monterrey	8	4	1	3	14	14	13
Pachuca	8	2	3	3	10	9	9
Necaxa	8	3	0	5	12	13	9
Jaguares	8	2	3	3	8	11	9
Veracruz	8	1	2	5	5	17	5

LEADING GOALSCORERS
9 Matias Vuoso (Santos)
8 Kleber Pereira (America)
7 Eliomar Marcon (Tecos UAG)

AFRICA

AFRICAN SUPER CUP

Mar 6 - Aba
Enyimba (Nig) 2 (Adegoke 97, Ogunbiyi 110)
Hearts of Oak (Gha) 0
Aet. **HT:** 0-0. **90mins:** 0-0

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

Preliminary rnd, 2nd legs

Feb 11: ACS Ksar (Mra) 1 FAR Rabat (Mor) 0 *FAR Rabat 4-1 on agg.*
Feb 12: KMKM (Zan) 0 Tusker (Ken) 3 *Tusker 7-1 on agg.*
Feb 13: Adulis (Eri) 0 SC Villa (Uga) 2 *SC Villa 3-0 on agg*; AS Douanes (Sen) 1 Djoliba (Mli) 0 *AS Douanes 2-1 on agg*; AS Port Louis (Mrs) 2 Kaizer Chiefs (SAf) 1 *Kaizer Chiefs 3-2 on agg*; ASFA Yennega (BuF) 2 TP Mazembe (DRC) 0 *Agg 2-2. ASFA Yennega 5-4 on pens*; Awassa Kenema (Eth) 1 Al Hilal (Sud) 1 *Al Hilal 3-2 on agg*; Blue Waters (Nam) 2 AS Aviacao (Ang) 1 *AS Aviacao 4-2 on agg*; Diables Noirs (Con) 0 Red Arrows (Zam) 0 *Agg 0-0. Red Arrows 3-2 on pens*; Donjo (Ben) 0 Racing Bafoussam (Cam) 2 *Racing Bafoussam 3-0 on agg*; Fello Star Labe (Gui) 1 ASC Diaraf (Sen) 0 *Agg 2-2. Fello Star Labe on away goals*; Ferroviario Nampula (Moz) 1 Simba SC (Tan) 1 *Simba SC 3-2 on agg*; Lesotho Defence Force (Les) 3 CAPS United (Zim) 4 *CAPS United 8-4 on agg*; Mangasport (Gab) 1 Sagrada Esperanca (Ang) 2 *Sagrada Esperanca 2-1 on agg*; Mhlambanyatsi Rovers (Swa) 1 Ajax Cape Town (SAf) 1 *Ajax Cape Town 2-1 on agg*; Rayon Sport (Rwa) 2 DC Motema Pembe (DRC) 0 *DC Motema Pembe 3-2 on agg*; Renacimiento (EqG) 1 Dolphin (Nig) 0 *Dolphin 3-1 on agg*; USJF Ravinala (Mad) 4 La Passe (Sey) 1 *USJF Ravinala 6-3 on agg.*
Feb 20: Renaissance (Chd) 3 Al Olympique (Lby) 2 *Al Olympique 4-3 on agg.*

Asante Kotoko (Gha) v Wallidan (Gam)
– Wallidan withdrawn by Gambian FA; Asante Kotoko walkover

1st rnd, 1st legs

Mar 4: SC Villa 0 Al Ahly (Egy) 0.
Mar 5: AS Douanes 0 Etoile Sahel (Tun) 0; Racing Bafoussam 1 Africa Sports (IvC) 0; Sagrada Esperanca 2 ASEC Abidjan (IvC) 2; Tusker 0 Zamalek (Egy) 1.
Mar 6: Al Hilal 2 Esperance (Tun) 0; Al Olympique 0 USM Alger (Alg) 2; AS Aviacao 2 Cotonsport (Cam) 0; Asante Kotoko 1 FAR Rabat 0; ASFA Yennega 1 Ajax Cape Town 0; CAPS United 1 Red Arrows 1; DC Motema Pembe 1 Raja Casablanca (Mor) 1; Dolphin 4 Hearts of Oak (Gha) 0; Fello Star Labe 1 JS Kabylie (Alg) 0; Simba SC 1 Enyimba (Nig) 1; USJF Ravinala 0 Kaizer Chiefs 1.

AFRICAN CONFEDERATION CUP

Preliminary rnd, 2nd legs

Feb 12: APR FC (Rwa) 3 Green Buffaloes (Zam) 1 *APR FC 3-2 on agg*; CO Bouafle (IvC) 0 CS Cilu (DRC) 3 *CS Cilu 8-0 on agg*; COD Meknes (Mor) 1 DUC (Sen) 0 *Agg 1-1. COD Meknes 3-1 on pens*; FC 105 Libreville (Gab) 2 Gazelle (Chd) 0 *Agg 3-3. FC 105 Libreville on away goals*; Kampala City Council (Uga) 1 Kipanga (Zan) 0 *Kampala City Council 2-1 on agg*; OC Khouribga (Mor) 1 AS Nianan Koulikoro (Mli) 0 *OC Khouribga 2-1 on agg*; Prisons SC (Tan) 1 USCA Foot (Mad) 0 *USCA Foot 4-2 on agg*; Red Star (Sey) 4 Savanne SC (Mrs) 0 *Red Star 4-2 on agg*; Sonangol Namibe (Ang) 1 BDF (Bot) 1 *BDF 4-2 on agg.*
Feb 13: AS Douanes (Tog) 0 Mogas 90 (Ben) 1 *AS Douanes 3-2 on agg*; Muni Sport (Con) 1 Sony Ela Nguema (EqG) 1 *Agg 1-1. Sony Ela Nguema on away goals.*
Feb 18: Al Ittihad (Lby) 4 ASFB (BuF) 0 *Al Ittihad 4-3 on agg.*

Armed Forces (Gam) v Cl Kamsar (Gui)
– Armed Forces withdrawn by Gambian FA; Cl Kamsar walkover

Banks (Eth) v Chemelil Sugar (Ken)
– Chemelil Sugar withdrew; Banks walkover

Hearts of Lions (Gha) v ASAC Concorde (Mra) – Hearts withdrew; ASAC Concorde walkover

Byes: Ferroviario Maputo (Moz), King Faisal Babies (Gha)

1st rnd, 1st legs

Mar 4: Al Ittihad 3 JS Kairouan (Tun) 0; ASAC Concorde 0 Bamboutos Mbouda (Cam) 0; CS Cilu 2 Union Douala (Cam) 1.
Mar 5: BDF 1 Saint-Eloi Lupopo (DRC) 0; Cl Kamsar 1 Bendel Insurance (Nig) 1; COD Meknes 0 AS Marsa (Tun) 1; Kampala City Council 0 APR FC 0; King Faisal Babies 3 ASC Ndiambour (Sen) 0; FC 105 Libreville 3 Inter Clube (Ang) 1; OC Khouribga 2 MC Oran (Alg) 0; Red Star 1 SuperSport United (SAf) 4; USCA Foot 3 Al Merreikh (Sud) 1.
Mar 6: AS Douanes 1 Stella (IvC) 0; Banks 0 Al Mokawloon (Egy) 0; Ferroviario Maputo 0 Ismaili (Egy) 1; Sony Ela Nguema 0 Enugu Rangers (Nig) 1.

ASIA

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

Group A
Mar 9: Paas (Irn) 2 Al Rayyan (Qat) 1; Al Salmia (Kuw) 3 Al Shorta (Irq) 1.

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Al Salmia	1	1	0	0	3	1	3
Paas	1	1	0	0	2	1	3
Al Rayyan	1	0	0	1	1	2	0
Al Shorta	1	0	0	1	1	3	0

Group B
Mar 9: Al Ain (UAE) 3 Al Wahda (Syr) 0; Al Shabab (Sau) 1 Sepahan (Irn) 1.

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Al Ain	1	1	0	0	3	0	3
Sepahan	1	0	1	0	1	1	1
Al Shabab	1	0	1	0	1	1	1
Al Wahda	1	0	0	1	0	3	0

Group C
Mar 9: Neftchi (Uzb) 1 Al Kuwait (Kuw) 0; Al Sadd (Qat) 2 Al Ahli (UAE) 0.

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Al Sadd	1	1	0	0	2	0	3
Neftchi	1	1	0	0	1	0	3
Al Kuwait	1	0	0	1	0	1	0
Al Ahli	1	0	0	1	0	2	0

Group D
Mar 8: Al Zawra'a (Irq) 1 Al Ahli (Sau) 2.
Mar 9: Al Jaish (Syr) 0 Pakhtakor (Uzb) 2.

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Pakhtakor	1	1	0	0	2	0	3
Al Ahli	1	1	0	0	2	1	3
Al Zawra'a	1	0	0	1	1	2	0
Al Jaish	1	0	0	1	0	2	0

Group E
Mar 9: Shenzhen Jianlibao (Chn) 1 Jubilo Iwata (Jap) 0; Hoang Anh Gia Lai (Vie) 1 Suwon Bluewings (SKo) 5.

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Suwon	1	1	0	0	5	1	3
Shenzhen	1	1	0	0	1	0	3
Jubilo Iwata	1	0	0	1	0	1	0
Hoang Anh GL	1	0	0	1	1	5	0

Group F
Mar 9: BEC Tero Sasana (Tha) 0 PSM Makasaar (Ins) 1; Yokohama F Marinos (Jap) 0 Shandong Luneng (Chn) 1.

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
PSM	1	1	0	0	1	0	3
Shandong	1	1	0	0	1	0	3
BEC Tero S'na	1	0	0	1	0	1	0
Yokohama FM	1	0	0	1	0	1	0

Group G

Mar 9: Busan I'Park (SKo) 8 Binh Dinh (Vie) 0; Persebaya Surabaya (Ins) 1 Krung Thai Bank (Tha) 2.

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Busan I'Park	1	1	0	0	8	0	3
Krung Thai Bank	1	1	0	0	2	1	3
Persebaya	1	0	0	1	1	2	0
Binh Dinh	1	0	0	1	0	8	0

Group winners qualify for quarter-finals
Bye to quarter-finals: Al Ittihad (Sau; defending champions)

AFC CUP

Group A

Mar 9: Al Faisaly (Jor) 1 Nebitchi (Tkm) 1; East Bengal (Ind) 0 Muktijoddha (Ban) 0.

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Nebitchi	1	0	1	0	1	1	1
Al Faisaly	1	0	1	0	1	1	1
Muktijoddha	1	0	1	0	0	0	1
East Bengal	1	0	1	0	0	0	1

Group B

Mar 9: Al Ahed (Leb) 1 Dempo (Ind) 0.

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Al Ahed	1	1	0	0	1	0	3
Al Hussein (Jor)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Dempo	1	0	0	1	0	1	0

Group C

Mar 9: Brothers Union (Ban) 1 Nisa (Tkm) 1.

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Nisa	1	0	1	0	1	1	1
Brothers Union	1	0	1	0	1	1	1
Nijmeh (Leb)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Group D

Mar 9: Perak (Mly) 2 Tampines Rovers (Sin) 1; Sun Hei (HK) 6 Valencia (Mdv) 1.

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Sun Hei	1	1	0	0	6	1	3
Perak	1	1	0	0	2	1	3
Tampine Rvrs	1	0	0	1	1	2	0
Valencia	1	0	0	1	1	6	0

Group E

Mar 9: New Radiant (Mdv) 2 Happy Valley (HK) 0; Home United (Sin) 2 Pahang (Mly) 1.

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
New Radiant	1	1	0	0	2	0	3
Home United	1	1	0	0	2	1	3
Pahang	1	0	0	1	1	2	0
Happy Valley	1	0	0	1	0	2	0

Group winners and the three best runners-up qualify for quarter-finals

FIXTURES

UNITED STATES

Sat, April 2
Chivas USA v DC United
MetroStars v Real Salt Lake
Columbus Crew v Los Angeles Galaxy
FC Dallas v Chicago Fire
Kansas City Wizards v Colorado Rapids
San Jose Earthquakes v New England Revolution

Sat, April 9
New England Revolution v Columbus Crew
DC United v Chicago Fire
Colorado Rapids v FC Dallas
Los Angeles Galaxy v Real Salt Lake
San Jose Earthquakes v Chivas USA

Fri, April 15
Columbus Crew v DC United

Sat, April 16
Real Salt Lake v Colorado Rapids
MetroStars v Kansas City Wizards
Chivas USA v FC Dallas
Chicago Fire v San Jose Earthquakes

Fri, April 22
MetroStars v Chicago Fire

Sat, April 23
DC United v New England Revolution
FC Dallas v Real Salt Lake
Colorado Rapids v Columbus Crew
Los Angeles Galaxy v Chivas USA
San Jose Earthquakes v Kansas City Wizards

Sat, April 30
Real Salt Lake v San Jose Earthquakes
New England Revolution v Chivas USA
Columbus Crew v Chicago Fire
Kansas City Wizards v DC United
Colorado Rapids v MetroStars
Los Angeles Galaxy v FC Dallas

Sat, May 7
Chivas USA v Real Salt Lake
MetroStars v San Jose Earthquakes
New England Revolution v Chicago Fire
DC United v Columbus Crew
Kansas City Wizards v FC Dallas

Sun, May 8
Los Angeles Galaxy v Colorado Rapids

Sat, May 14
Real Salt Lake v Los Angeles Galaxy
New England Revolution v DC United
Columbus Crew v Kansas City Wizards
Chicago Fire v MetroStars
Colorado Rapids v Chivas USA
San Jose Earthquakes v FC Dallas

Wed, May 18
FC Dallas v Colorado Rapids

Sat, May 21
MetroStars v New England Revolution
DC United v Kansas City Wizards
Columbus Crew v Real Salt Lake
Chicago Fire v Colorado Rapids
Los Angeles Galaxy v San Jose Earthquakes

Sun, May 22
Chivas USA v FC Dallas

Wed, May 25
Chicago Fire v New England Revolution
Kansas City Wizards v MetroStars
Colorado Rapids v San Jose Earthquakes
Los Angeles Galaxy v Columbus Crew

Sat, May 28
Real Salt Lake v Chicago Fire
Chivas USA v Los Angeles Galaxy
New England Revolution v Colorado Rapids
DC United v FC Dallas
Columbus Crew v MetroStars
Kansas City Wizards v San Jose Earthquakes

Tue, May 31
MetroStars v Chicago Fire

Wed, June 1
Chivas USA v Kansas City Wizards

Sat, June 4
New England Revolution v Kansas City Wizards
Chicago Fire v Chivas USA
Los Angeles Galaxy v MetroStars
Real Salt Lake v FC Dallas
San Jose Earthquakes v DC United

Sat, June 11
Columbus Crew v Colorado Rapids
Kansas City Wizards v New England Revolution
Los Angeles Galaxy v Real Salt Lake

Sun, June 12
Chicago Fire v FC Dallas
MetroStars v DC United
Chivas USA v San Jose Earthquakes

Wed, June 15
DC United v Chicago Fire
Colorado Rapids v Los Angeles Galaxy

Sat, June 18
Chivas USA v Colorado Rapids
MetroStars v Columbus Crew
DC United v New England Revolution
Chicago Fire v Kansas City Wizards
FC Dallas v Los Angeles Galaxy
San Jose Earthquakes v Real Salt Lake

Wed, June 22
Real Salt Lake v Los Angeles Galaxy
Columbus Crew v New England Revolution
FC Dallas v Chivas USA

Sat, June 25
New England Revolution v MetroStars
Kansas City Wizards v Chivas USA
Colorado Rapids v FC Dallas
San Jose Earthquakes v Los Angeles Galaxy

Sun, June 26
Chicago Fire v Real Salt Lake

Wed, June 29
Kansas City Wizards v Columbus Crew
San Jose Earthquakes v Colorado Rapids

Sat, July 2
Chivas USA v Chicago Fire
Columbus Crew v DC United
FC Dallas v San Jose Earthquakes

Mon, July 4
Real Salt Lake v MetroStars
Colorado Rapids v Kansas City Wizards
Los Angeles Galaxy v New England Revolution

Sat, July 9
MetroStars v Los Angeles Galaxy
Chivas USA v Real Salt Lake
DC United v Kansas City Wizards
Columbus Crew v San Jose Earthquakes
Chicago Fire v New England Revolution

Fri, July 15
DC United v San Jose Earthquakes

Sat, July 16
MetroStars v Colorado Rapids
New England Revolution v FC Dallas
Chicago Fire v Columbus Crew
Kansas City Wizards v Real Salt Lake
Los Angeles Galaxy v Chivas USA

Wed, July 20
Columbus Crew v MetroStars
Kansas City Wizards v DC United
Colorado Rapids v San Jose Earthquakes

Fri, July 22
Chivas USA v New England Revolution

Sat, July 23
Real Salt Lake v FC Dallas
Columbus Crew v Kansas City Wizards
Colorado Rapids v Chicago Fire
Los Angeles Galaxy v DC United
San Jose Earthquakes v MetroStars

Wed, July 27
MetroStars v FC Dallas
New England Revolution v Los Angeles Galaxy

Thu, July 28
DC United v Real Salt Lake

Sat, August 6
Real Salt Lake v Chivas USA
New England Revolution v Kansas City Wizards
Chicago Fire v DC United
FC Dallas v MetroStars
Colorado Rapids v Los Angeles Galaxy
San Jose Earthquakes v Columbus Crew

Wed, August 10
New England Revolution v Real Salt Lake
DC United v MetroStars
Chicago Fire v Kansas City Wizards

Sat, August 13
Real Salt Lake v Kansas City Wizards
DC United v Chivas USA
Chicago Fire v Los Angeles Galaxy
FC Dallas v New England Revolution
San Jose Earthquakes v Colorado Rapids

Sun, August 14
MetroStars v Columbus Crew

Fri, August 19
Kansas City Wizards v Chicago Fire

Sat, August 20
Real Salt Lake v San Jose Earthquakes
DC United v Los Angeles Galaxy
Columbus Crew v FC Dallas
Colorado Rapids v New England Revolution

Sun, August 21
MetroStars v Chivas USA

Fri, August 26
Kansas City Wizards v Columbus Crew
Colorado Rapids v Real Salt Lake

Sat, August 27
New England Revolution v DC United
FC Dallas v Chivas USA
San Jose Earthquakes v Los Angeles Galaxy

Sun, August 28
Chicago Fire v MetroStars

Sat, September 3
Chivas USA v Columbus Crew
MetroStars v Kansas City Wizards
FC Dallas v San Jose Earthquakes
Colorado Rapids v DC United

Sun, September 4
Los Angeles Galaxy v Chicago Fire

Mon, September 5
Real Salt Lake v New England Revolution

Sat, September 10
New England Revolution v Columbus Crew
FC Dallas v DC United
Kansas City Wizards v MetroStars
Los Angeles Galaxy v Colorado Rapids
San Jose Earthquakes v Chivas USA

Sat, September 17
Chivas USA v San Jose Earthquakes
MetroStars v New England Revolution
Kansas City Wizards v Los Angeles Galaxy
DC United v Colorado Rapids
Columbus Crew v Chicago Fire

Sun, September 18
FC Dallas v Real Salt Lake

Wed, September 21
Real Salt Lake v Chivas USA
Columbus Crew v New England Revolution
FC Dallas v Los Angeles Galaxy
San Jose Earthquakes v Chicago Fire

Sat, September 24
Real Salt Lake v Columbus Crew
Chivas USA v Colorado Rapids
New England Revolution v MetroStars
Chicago Fire v DC United
San Jose Earthquakes v FC Dallas

Sun, September 25
Los Angeles Galaxy v Kansas City Wizards

Sat, October 1
MetroStars v DC United
New England Revolution v San Jose Earthquakes
Columbus Crew v Chivas USA
Colorado Rapids v Real Salt Lake
Los Angeles Galaxy v FC Dallas
Kansas City Wizards v Chicago Fire

Wed, October 5
Real Salt Lake v DC United
FC Dallas v Columbus Crew
Colorado Rapids v Chivas USA

Sat, October 8
Chivas USA v Los Angeles Galaxy
DC United v MetroStars
Chicago Fire v Columbus Crew
FC Dallas v Colorado Rapids
Kansas City Wizards v New England Revolution
San Jose Earthquakes v Real Salt Lake

Sat, October 15
Real Salt Lake v Colorado Rapids
New England Revolution v Chicago Fire
DC United v Columbus Crew
FC Dallas v Kansas City Wizards
Los Angeles Galaxy v San Jose Earthquakes

Sun, October 16
Chivas USA v MetroStars

the Knowledge

everything you need to know about...

Players turned pundits

ALDO SERENA, ex-striker with Italy, Juve, Torino, Inter and Milan, is now one of the most respected pundits on Italian TV. Currently with Silvio Berlusconi's Mediaset group.

Vincenzo D'Amico, a winger in the Lazio side that won Serie A in 1974, has established himself as RAI TV's top analyst, especially on their Sunday night highlights package.

Giacomo Bulgarelli. An outstanding midfielder for Italy and Bologna in the 1960s, his strong views on the game have been a staple on Italian TV for close to three decades.

Youri Mulder. The former Schalke and Holland striker is the rising star of Dutch broadcasting, presenting TV and radio programmes, as well as writing columns. His father Jan also played for Holland and turned to journalism too.

Wim Rijsbergen. The ex-Holland and Feyenoord centre-back is the top pundit for state broadcasters NOS.

Thomas Helmer. The Bayern Munich and Germany central defender is now making a name for himself as the front-man for several programmes on the DSF sports channel.

Gunter Netzer. A star playmaker with West Germany, Borussia Monchengladbach and Real Madrid in the 1970s. Has a wide range of

Media darling...Luis Fernandez

media interests: he comments for the ARD channel on German internationals, writes a column for *Sports Bild* and heads his own sports marketing agency.

'Ex-keeper Pfaff has even starred in his own reality show, a cross between *The Osbournes* and *Laurel and Hardy*'

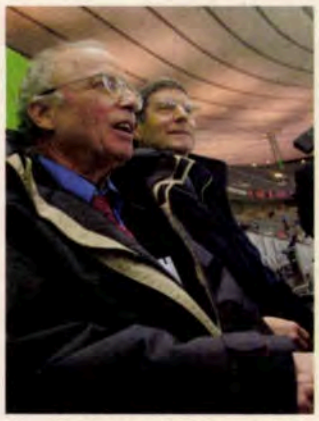
Udo Lattek. Never pulls his punches as a controversial panellist on DSF sports channel programmes. Eight times a Bundesliga-winning coach with Bayern and Gladbach.

Paul Breitner. Whether in print or on the Sat 1 TV channel, the former West Germany and Bayern full-back/ midfielder can be relied upon for hard-hitting views.

Luis Fernandez. The ex-French international midfielder is currently the darling of the French media, hosting his own talk show on Radio Monte Carlo and appearing on Telefoot, the weekly football programme on TF1 television.

Jean-Michel Larque. Made his name as the captain of Saint-Etienne in the 1970s. Since the early 1980s has been the voice of French football, co-commentating for TF1. A long-serving editor/consultant on *Onze* magazine.

Laurent Paganelli. Diminutive winger with Saint-Etienne in the late 1970s; he was only 16 when he first played for *Les Verts*. Now a popular on-pitch interviewer for Canal Plus.



Voice of football...Jean-Michel Larque (right)

Michel. Ex-Real Madrid and Spain midfielder. These days earns a living as a newspaper columnist and commentator for TVE.

Michael Robinson. Former Liverpool and Manchester City striker who is now

Star turn...Michael Robinson

one of the biggest stars on Spanish TV, presenting *El Dia Despues* (The Day After) on Canal Plus. Also provided the Spanish voice-over on *Shrek 2*.

Jean-Marie Pfaff. Larger than life ex-Bayern and Belgium keeper. A much sought-after pundit on Belgian TV and has even starred in his own reality show, a cross between *The Osbournes* and *Laurel and Hardy*.

Tostao, a key player in Brazil's 1970 World Cup-winning team, is now Brazil's most influential columnist, writing for the *Folha de Sao Paulo*.

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